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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

HUSTLENOMICS: SUCCESS THROUGH THE HUSTLEECONOMY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Folashade Onadeko

July, 2022

Gabriella Miramontes, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

This study is devoted to all hustlers who face the treacherous landscape of the hustleconomy in order to succeed and achieve the liberty to live life on their terms. A special thank you to every hustler who took part in this study by sharing your experiences, perspectives, and knowledge. Due to you, hustlenomics is better understood. Furthermore, your participation has also given many other aspirant hustlers the information, wisdom, methods, and best practices they need to engage in hustlenomics and succeed.

This study is also dedicated to my children – Raffi and Funmi. You are my motivation for living and thus you inspire me to hustle and thrive.

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To mom and dad, my ancestors whose shoulders I stand on, thank you; because of you, I am. Thank you for the wisdom and strength you have inculcated in me. Despite the fact that you two are no longer physically here, I know you both are with me in spirit, and all I can do is hope that by living a life of love and service, I am doing you both proud.

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## VITA

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- L. Boise, A. Tuepker, S. Onadeko, J. Paschoal. (2010). The House Meeting Project of the African Partnership for Health – Health Needs of African Refugees and Immigrants. LCSNW
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop a guide to success for hustlers engaged in hustlenomics. This guide is based on the trials and impediments as well as the tactics and best practices effective hustlers deem as essential in leading them towards success within the hustleconomy. To accomplish this goal, a review of literature along with a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted.

The qualitative phenomenology research focused on the population of influencer hustlers as the investigation's subject. Interviews was used as the approach to collect data. Hence, 12 influencer hustlers that met the criteria of inclusion were interviewed utilizing 12 open-ended questions. At the conclusion of the study, essential knowledge and insights were garnered pertaining to the quandaries and impediments that hustlers face, as well as a knowledge of the ideas and activities that hustlers must understand and implement in order to prosper and thrive in the hustleconomy.

The results of the phenomenological study were integrated with the knowledge gained from the literature review to engender the Hustlenomics Model for Success, a resource to support hustlers on their path to success.

*Keywords:* hustlenomics, hustleconomy, hustledemic, hustlers, leadership

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

The means by which society conducts business is evolving. Increasingly the formal way of working is changing and the traditional 9 to 5 job with a pension plan and benefits that previous generations enjoyed is no longer sufficient (Oberholtzer, 2016). People are hustling, they are creatively constructing their careers, seizing every economic opportunity to make money, and thus taking charge of their destinies (Oberholtzer, 2016; Schneider, 2016; Thieme, 2018). This shift in how people work is creating the hustledemic, the expansion of the hustle economy. The hustle economy which is referred to as the hustleconomy throughout this study is a boundaryless economic arena where people hustle voraciously by doing whatever it takes from online sales to consulting to handyman work to influencer marketing to earn a living (Kost et al., 2020; Oberholtzer, 2016).

The expansion of the hustleconomy can be ascribed to the introduction of new technologies and new innovative commerce methods that has transformed the way society conducts business (Oberholtzer, 2016; Ravenelle, 2019). According to Thieme (2018), the hustleconomy is also expanding because of the rising rates of global poverty especially in urban centers and emerging markets, over saturated economies that do not have sufficient number of jobs for the populace and decreasing access to resources and support that are often provided by the government. As a result, people hustle because they seek economic liberation (Smith, 2016 a & b). They want to be financially liberated from poverty, to live the life of their dreams on their terms, to explore their passion and break from the systems that oppresses them (Castells, 2015; Sessions et.al., 2021; Smith, 2016 a & b; Thieme, 2018). However, the hustleconomy has always been neglected and is just beginning to garner some attention. Thus, in order for hustlers, people

that earn a living in the hustleconomy to optimize opportunities and reach their fullest potential, it is vital that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge of the best practices that enables them to be successful. With this in mind, this study seeks to comprehend the undercurrents within the hustleconomy and the best practices and strategies employed by successful hustlers that are engage in it.

Ravenelle (2019) claims that there is nothing new about the existence of hustlenomics and the people that engage in the hustleconomy. From the neighborhood handyman to the independent consultant, people have always hustled to earn a living (Smith, 2016 a, Thieme, 2018). However, hustlenomics has evolved beyond the neighborhood handyman to an innovative economic arena that utilizes technology and other innovative methods to reach their clientele (Koutsimpogiorgos et al., 2020; Smith, 2016a & b). As a result, although hustlenomics has always been a part of society, one can attribute the current expansion of the hustleconomy to the increasing access to technologies and innovative new ways of conducting business that has created more and new opportunities for people to flourish and prosper.

Today, there are copious apps and online platforms such as Airbnb, Amazon, Facebook, Instagram, Jiji.ng, Lyft, Postmates, Shopify, Spotify, Squarespace, Task Rabbit, Tic Tok, YouTube, and many more that make it easy for hustlers to reach and connect with potential customers (Koutsimpogiorgos et al., 2020; Ravenelle, 2019). These platforms enable hustlers to make a living by completing a range of online activities such as consulting, influencer marketing, driving for hire and hauling services, sharing their belongings with others, cleaning and gardening of houses, handyman labor, selling items and personally created inventions, and other services (Koutsimpogiorgos et al., 2020; Smith, 2016a & b). However, hustlers who engage in today's hustlenomics are not like those in the past, they are workers, people in a multitude of



fields, from high to low income earners; for example, management consultants, software developers, and video producers who are considered hustlers are high income earners while handymen, individuals that clean houses, and drivers who are also hustlers earn less and are paid per task or per hour (Kaitharath, 2019).

Influencers are also another type of hustlers that have benefitted from the introduction of apps and online platforms. According to Glucksman (2017), with the onset of online social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, Tic Tok and YouTube, corporations are now presented with the opportunity to pick from a variety of sources to sell their products. This option, Glucksman attests has stemmed to the augmentation of social media influencer marketing. Thusly, Glucksman explains that influencers can be found promoting their brand and/or supporting other companies through sponsored material on their personal social media platforms. This is due to the fact that, as per Glucksman, in current times, everyday people rely on their peers to help with their purchasing decision process. It is for this reason, that the development of social media has provided an innovative and novel outlet for influencer hustlers and for organizations to communicate with their clientele in a direct and authentic manner. Thus, as per Glucksman, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, Tic Tok and YouTube has allotted influencer hustlers the opportunity to rapidly become the current prevalent marketing and public relations phenomena of today's society.

The augmentation of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy can also be ascribed to an increasing cost of living, higher levels of poverty, broken or fragmented governmental, societal, and economic institutional systems and infrastructures, and individuals wanting increased control of their lives and livelihoods (Castells, 2015; Khanna and Palepu, 2010; Sessions et.al., 2021; Smith, 2016 a & b; Thieme, 2013, 2018; Thieme et al., 2021). According to Thieme (2013),

poverty induced by increasing cost of living, elevated joblessness, and the deficiency of essential social services especially in urban underserved neighborhoods has resulted in many individuals seeking survival within the hustleconomy. Thus, Thieme claims that through hustlenomics and the hustleconomy arena, many in underserved communities such as present-day urban society can seek opportunities for survival especially since they are often omitted from the formal economy. Consequently, hustlenomics is defined by the battle between uncertainty and the hope experience of the marginalized and underserved (Schneider, 2016; Thieme, 2018). However, as per Smith (2016 b), one must acknowledge that hustlenomics is not always the only avenue of deriving income for hustlers. Hustlenomics can be an additional avenue to make money especially for those individuals who are underemployed or seeking a particular way of life or following their passion (McDermott, 2017; Smith, 2016 a & b).

According to Khanna and Palepu (2010), hustlenomics and the hustleconomy has also been growing because it thrives in emerging environments. This is because as per Khanna and Palepu, in emerging environments, gaps are conceived from broken, immature, or fragmented institutions that the economy requires to function optimally. Subsequently, allowing the chance and opportunity for hustlers to circumnavigate the entanglements of calamities, obscurity, and anticipation, while the economy and society as a whole progress in the journey towards emergence (Khanna and Palepu, 2010; Schneider, 2016; Thieme, 2018). It is for this reason that Thieme (2018) argues that hustlenomics has the tendency to be indeterminate, off-grid, and susceptible nevertheless it maintains reason and action which is fundamental in moderating the circumstances of adversity and subsistence.

To fully grasp the hustledemic, this research will examine the hustle economies of Nigeria the largest emerging economy of Africa and California USA, the fifth largest economy in the world.

### *Nigeria's Hustleconomy.*

Nigeria is one of the fastest-growing emerging economies in the world. It is the largest economy and the most populous nation on the African continent (World Bank, n.d.; World Economic Forum, n.d.). This emerging market economy is a middle income, mixed market economy comprised of thriving economic sectors such as oil and gas, agriculture, entertainment, financial services, communications, and more (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; United Nations Development Programme, n.d.; World bank, n.d.). Nigeria's economy has reached the threshold of over \$1 trillion GDP making it the largest economy on the African continent (World Bank, n.d.). On its quest to full emergence, the Nigerian government has developed and implemented policies and strategies such as providing resources geared towards the diversification of the economy, construction of structural infrastructures to enable commerce to move freely, and the buildup of infrastructure such as power and electricity, etc. Nevertheless, Nigeria is an emerging nation and thus struggles with the growing pains a country goes through in the journey towards emergence. For this reason, Nigeria is also Africa's largest hustleconomy; a nation to which Africans across the continent voyage to pursue prospects for improving their lives and livelihoods.

Nigeria's population is young and growing. Nigeria is a populous nation with over 211 million people (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Statista, 2021). About 51% of its population live in urban areas such as Lagos and Abuja (United Nations, 2015). The vast majority of Nigeria's population is young with 70% of Nigerians being are under the age of 30 and the

median age of 18.1 years (Effoduh, 2020; Indexmundi.com, 2021; PopulationPyramid.net, 2021; Worldometer.com, 2021). As Nigeria's population continues to grow, it is projected to reach over 400 million people by 2040 (World Bank, n.d.). Thus, for a country whose geographical size is similar to that of Texas, USA, Nigeria's population is large and young.

The journey towards emergence has not been easy for Nigeria. Agriculture is the ancestral industry of the nation, and it has remained a major industry until today accounting for 18% of Nigeria's GDP (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; World Bank, n.d.). A third of Nigeria's population is presently engaged in the agriculture sector, most of them as subsistent farmers; thus, Nigeria is currently sixth in the world and first in Africa in terms of agricultural output (United Nations, n.d.; World Bank; n.d.). However, regardless of the investment and agricultural friendly policies the government has instituted, the agricultural sector is still emerging and performing below its potential. Furthermore, Nigeria's population is growing faster than the output of the agricultural sector as a result, the agricultural sector is underperforming below expectation.

Between the year 2000 and 2014, despite the global recession, Nigeria prospered growing at the average rate of 7% per year (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Statista, 2021; World Bank, n.d.). However, due to the crash in oil prices in 2015, Nigeria fell into a recession. Nigeria's recession was a derivative of Nigeria's oil curse, its dependence on oil, because oil is 78% of Nigeria's exports while also accounting for a third of the banking industry's credits and about half of the Nigerian government revenues (World Economic Forum, n.d.). Prior to 2015, Nigeria's Bonny Light crude oil price was selling for \$147 USD per barrel; but, when the prices of oil crashed in 2015 Nigeria's oil was selling for less than \$40 USD per barrel resulting in Nigeria's economy which was heavily dependent oil for 78% of its export revenue suffering and

plunging into recession (Okolo & Udabah, 2019; World Bank, n.d.; World Economic Forum, n.d.). Nigeria's dependency on oil is indicative of its emerging nature; this is because Nigeria's economic sectors are still on the journey towards emergence thus, until Nigeria's economic sectors are operating at their fullest potential, the country must rely on its highest income industry which is oil and gas (Khanna & Palepu, 2010).

Prior to the recession which started in 2015, Nigeria was one of the fastest growing economies in the world; during which the economy was growing at an average rate of 7% but after the recession and before the onset of Covid-19, Nigeria's economy was growing at a steady rate of 2% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021.; Statista, 2021; World Bank, n.d.; World Economic Forum, n.d.). This trend can also be observed in the nation's inflation rate that was in the single digits before the recession but after the recession, it grew to 19% in 2019 before Covid-19 started (World Economic Forum, n.d.). The general government fiscal deficit before the recession was around 1.8% but similar to other indicators the fiscal deficit was impacted and increased to 4.4% in 2019 before the onset of Covid-19 (World Bank, n.d.; World Economic Forum; n.d.).

Between 2017 and 2019, before Covid-19, Nigeria recovered from its recession and was growing at a steady rate of 2% per year (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Statista, 2021; World Bank, n.d.; World Economic Forum; n.d.). A 2% growth rate is good for a fully mature nation like the United Kingdom, however, for a nation like Nigeria that is still emerging, a 2% growth rate is not sufficient to lead the nation towards full emergence (Khanna and Palepu, 2010). Economic emergence or economic maturity pertains to the economic dynamism and buoyance of a nation; a collection of economic factors such as macroeconomic stability, a strong transformative structure of the economy, relative income distribution justice, established systems

and infrastructures needed for economic transactions and so on (Khanna and Palepu, 2010; Shili, 2016). Accordingly, a fully emerged economy is a market economy that has fully attained the factors of economic emergence while an emerging economy is a market economy that is still working on building its economic emergence.

Nigeria's population is large and growing at a much faster rate than its economy. This is a major conundrum that has resulted in high unemployment and underemployment rates. Presently, 33.3% of Nigerians are unemployed, 22.8% are underemployed and an alarming 42.5% of youth are unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics; 2021; Statista, 2021; World Bank, n.d.; World Economic Forum, n.d.). Hence, it is clear that Nigeria's economy is growing too slow to provide the amount of employment that its fast-growing populace needs to survive.

Nigeria is an expensive place to live. 40% of Nigeria's population live below the poverty line and with the onset of Covid-19 an additional 25% of Nigerians are considered vulnerable to falling below the poverty line (World Economic Forum, n.d.). Nigeria is a highly social culture and thus individuals and families are interconnected. As a consequence, individuals are not only obligated to care for their nuclear family but also to support their extended family and the community as a whole. However, the average monthly salary of a Nigerian is about 339,000 Naira when converted is about \$827 (National Bureau of Statistics; 2021). The average cost of living per household is approximately \$1,585 per month and the average cost of a three-bedroom apartment is \$2,570 per year, rent in Nigeria is typically paid on an annual or every 2 years basis (Numbeo, 2021; Republic of Nigeria Consulate, Atlanta, 2021). Given the average household income and the average cost of living with rent excluding extended family and community commitments, it is apparent that even those who are working are unable to satisfy their nuclear family's obligations, much alone their extended family and community responsibilities. As a

result, the average employed Nigerian that is working in the formal sector is underemployed. Consequently, as Nigerians wait for the governmental efforts towards full emergence to be attained, they must survive; thus, they hustle.

According to Ogechukwu (2011), Nigeria has always been a hustle economy due to its precarious frontier spirit and its ancestral engagement in trade which in large part is reflective of the attitude and hustle culture of Nigeria. Ogechukwu (2011) goes on to explain that trading and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is a function of Nigerians inherited pursuit towards self-reliance and success. For generations, as per Ogechukwu (2011), Nigerians engaged in hustle by trading what they have grown or created such as trading agricultural goods such as yam and cassava, iron smelting, cottage industries, etc. Thus, Brown (2015) holds that as Nigeria struggles towards emergence, Nigerians left in the gap of unemployment and underemployment must revert to an ancestral way of survival which is self-reliance and hustle. Brown explains that Nigerians hustle to earn a living and are forced to be self-reliant by developing their own systems and infrastructures to enable them to hustle. For instance, Brown (2015) highlights the fact that Nigeria is the number one market globally for generators because the provision of electricity by the government is inefficient, Nigerians drill their own boreholes for water because the water supply provided by the government is inadequate and unsafe. As a consequence, Nigerians are hustlers that will hustle and do all it takes to survive while the government and formal economy strives towards emergence (Brown, 2015; Ogechukwu, 2011).

According to Brown (2015), approximately two thirds of Nigeria's population are hustlers. As per Adekoya (2018), hustling in Nigeria could include illegitimate activities such as corruption, drug dealing, 419- fraud, and smuggling; nevertheless, the majority of Nigeria's hustlers are engaged in legitimate hustle activities such as trade, influencer marketing, gig work,

entrepreneurship etc. Adekoya (2018) goes on to explain that hustlenomics in Nigeria is comprised of everyone; men, women, youth, rich, poor, employed, underemployed and unemployed. This is due to the fact that according to Adekoya (2018) Nigeria is an emerging country that is currently afflicted with broken institutions, systems, and infrastructure that obstructs the full economic potential and development of the nation. Adekoya (2018) holds that the brokenness of Nigeria's institutions can be observed in the extensive corruption within the systems of the nation. Corruption, according to Adekoya (2018) and Khanna and Palepu (2010) is not simply a derivative of greed but a byproduct of poverty, increasing cost of living, opportunity created and exacerbated by broken systems and structures. Hence, Adekoya (2018) maintains that many Nigerians participate in corruption and other illegitimate activities out of desperation to earn a living; doing illegitimate businesses or transactions to placate their copious needs. For example, civil servants are underemployed; their salaries are insubstantial and for this reason, they are the major perpetrators of corruption in the governmental agencies (Adekoya, 2018; Brown, 2015).

Technology and new innovative ways of commerce has enhanced hustlenomics in Nigeria. According to Dorcas (2017), it has helped hustlers mobilize and harness resources such as technology, innovative new ways of conducting commerce, local raw materials, domestic savings for investment and other accessible resources and thus has appreciably contributed to the nation's GDP and GNI. Dorcas (2017) holds that the introduction of technological innovations, online platforms, and apps has made it easier for Nigeria's hustlers to trade and sway the market through influencer marketing. For instance, Dorcas holds that technological platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Fiverr, UpWork, Toptal, Paydesk and ride-hailing platforms such as Uber have become a new way for Nigerians to hustle. Indeed, these new online marketplaces such as



jiji.ng and Etsy has created outlets for Nigerians to sell their goods and services while reaching customers locally and globally. While Wali et al. (2020) hold that social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube provide the space for hustlers to make money through influencer marketing by persuading their peers to purchase or utilize the service of a brand they are sponsoring. Accordingly, these technological platforms and applications establish a market by linking clients who require a certain service or product that hustlers can provide, such as food delivery, transportation share, management consulting, content creation, music creation, graphics design, engineering, and more. For instance, Enwukwe (2021) highlights that Kobo360 and Lori Systems have generated approximately \$37 million USD by engaging consumers with third-party truck drivers. According to Enwukwe, this is noteworthy because Lori Systems projects that the African cargo handling market is worth \$180 billion annually. Another example as per Enwukwe is Andela, a Mark Zuckerberg-funded company currently worth \$700 million that interlinks Nigerian developers to international markets, thus generating approximately \$37 million USD.

### *California's hustleconomy.*

California is an emerged, mixed economy state with an economy that is comprised of economic sectors such as finance, business services, agriculture, entertainment, technology, manufacturing, etc. According to the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (2019), California's economy is the fifth largest economy in the world with a GDP of 6.4%, and gross state product (GSP) of \$3.2 trillion. Most of the economic activity of the state is concentrated in Los Angeles and its surround suburbs and the San Francisco Bay Area. The Los Angeles area is mostly known for its economic activities around the entertainment industry while San Francisco Bay Area is the center for the technology industry and start-ups.

California is also known for its agricultural sector which is centered in the central valley of California (California Department of Food and Agriculture, 2020). In 2019, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (2020), agriculture accounted for \$50 billion of the state's cash receipts, and \$21.7 billion in exports.

Geographically, California is the third largest state in the USA and it attains 39.6 million residents as its population continues to grow at the steady rate of approximately 0.38% annually (United States Census Bureau, n.d.; World Population Review, 2021). Thus, the United States Census Bureau (n.d.) holds that California is the most populous state in the country with 1 out of 8 Americans coming from the state. Additionally, the United States Census Bureau claims that the majority of California's residents dwell in the urban areas such as Los Angeles, the largest county in the state, San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego, Sacramento, and Long Beach. California's population is diverse and comprised of a mature population with the median age of 37 years and Californians are highly educated with 33.93% of the population attaining a college degree or higher (Public Policy Institute of California, 2021; United States Census Bureau, n.d.). Thus, not only does California have a robust economy, but it also attains a sizable, well-educated population to grow its economy.

Prior to the onset of Covid-19, the California Department of Employment (2021) holds that California's unemployment rate hovered between 3.9% and 4.1%. Thus, unlike Nigeria whose emerging economy could not supply sufficient jobs for its masses, California's mature economy could hence, the reason for the low unemployment rates. However, similar to Nigeria, the cost of living in California is high.

As per the United States Census Bureau (n.d.), 47% of Californians are married with an average household size of 4 persons and a median income of \$85,837 and all other household

type size is 3 persons with a median income of \$75,236. However, the United States Census Bureau reveals that the median cost of a house in California is approximately \$625,000 which is 43% higher than the national average of \$270,000; in urban areas like San Francisco, the median price of a home is higher exceeding \$1 million.

The United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, analyzes the variances in price of consumption, cost-of-living consumptions such as groceries, housing, transportation etc., called the regional price parities (RPPs) across major metropolitan areas and states. Based on the agency's analysis, cost-of-living consumptions such as groceries, utilities, and transportation all cost more in California when compared against other states. Based on the RPPs where the national average is 100, California had the highest RPP in the country for housing rents at 153.6, San Francisco Bay Area has the highest RPPs for all cost-of living consumptions in the country at 134.5 and Southern California, Los Angeles-Long Beach and Anaheim has the third highest RPPs at 118.8 after New York (United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2021). Thus, it is clear that California is one of the most expensive places to live considering that the average household and family income especially when compared to the national average household income of \$62,843 is not much higher than that of the national average but when considering the cost of living of most Californians against their income and the national average, it is clear that most Californians are underemployed.

The high cost of living in California begins to justify why 13% of Californians fall below the poverty line with minorities falling even further; 20.53% of African Americans, 17.67% of Hispanics, 19.46% of Native Americans fall below the poverty line (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). Furthermore, Covid-19 has had a great impact on the state increasing the

unemployment rates to 14% thus, leaving many communities further vulnerable to struggle and poverty (California Department of Employment, 2021). Thus, with the high cost of living in California, many individuals are forced to seek additional income to survive thus they engage in hustlenomics.

High cost of living is not the only reason Californians are engaged in hustlenomics. Californians are also joining hustlenomics because they want to be financially liberated to explore their passion and have ownership of their life and schedules. Additionally, they are also entering the hustleconomy because of the high cost of doing business in California. Indeed, hustlenomics through technology such as digital earning platforms present valuable benefits to Californians that choose to engage in it such as the liberty and flexibility to earn an income at a time and place, they desire and the capacity to transform a hobby or passion into a source of income (Smith, 2016 a & b). Californians are also engaging in hustlenomics because it is expensive to do business in California thus to evade the regulations and fees required to do business in California especially during the budding phase of the business, many engage in the hustleconomy (Schneider, 2016). For instance, it cost \$800 to register a corporation in California; indeed, S corporations are assessed 1.5 % tax on their total income or \$800 whichever is larger this is a steep fee compared to states like Texas that charges a flat \$300 fee to register (State of California Franchise Board, 2021; Texas Secretary of State, 2021).

California has always been a disruptive hustleconomy from the gold rush era to the present. According to St. Clair (1998), prior to the gold rush era, California was mainly an agricultural, pastoral area; however, with the gold rush, California experienced its first economic disruption during which individuals from all professional backgrounds voyaged to the gold fields to hustle their way to fortune. This same hustler spirit help spur the technology boom of the

Silicon Valley and today is spurring the expansion of the hustleconomy. Being that hustlenomics is boundaryless, hustlers in California work in all sectors of the economy such as professional, scientific, and technical services such as accounting, legal, administrative, construction, real estate, influencer marketing, janitorial, landscaping services, entertainment and recreation and other services. With the introduction of technology and online platforms, many hustlers that choose to engage in hustlenomics are finding it easier to enter the hustleconomy. There are copious number of apps and online platforms for all types of hustlers to utilize to advertise, influence, and reach their clientele (Smith, 2016 a & b). For instance, an artist can sell on Etsy, Amazon, and Instagram, a graphic artist can reach clients globally through Fiverr, an influencer can reach their followers through their social media platform on Instagram, Facebook, Spotify and YouTube, while a consultant can build a website through Squarespace and book appointments through the website.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite its growth and expansion, the hustleconomy remains an undervalued and often misjudged economy that is often consigned to being an economy of the poor, illegitimate, and emerging global south (Khanna and Palepu, 2010). This perception severely limits the potential of the hustleconomy and the hustlers that engage in it. The hustleconomy is a space that promises to bring new and more entrepreneurship opportunities to many that chooses to engage in it. However, due to the perception society has of hustlenomics, little is known of it. Not understanding the size, dynamics, and potential of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy, many governments has allocated minimal resources, infrastructure to hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy (Thieme, 2018).

The lack of access to needed resources, systems, and infrastructure that hustlers need to thrive in hustlenomics further impedes the hustle of vulnerable members of society thus limiting their quest to survive and thus, pushing many underserved populations further into crisis. Also, without access to the tools, best practices, and strategies needed to be successful, hustlers are not reaching their fullest potential in hustlenomics. Accordingly, deflating the potential of the hustleconomy and the hustlers that engage in it.

### **Purpose Statement**

The goal of this research is to provide a guide to success that will assist hustlers in becoming more productive in hustlenomics. To achieve this goal, this study will look at the techniques and best practices that have been identified as crucial in guiding hustlers to success. Furthermore, because the hustleconomy has been relegated to the economy of developing markets and the impoverished, little is known about it. Subsequently, segments of society such as governments and their agencies, as well as the academic community, have failed to adequately research, develop appropriate policies, and distribute the resources, infrastructure, and mechanisms that hustlers require to prosper. As a result, the goal of this research is also to add to the body of knowledge on hustlenomics and the hustleconomy's undercurrents. This will be useful in reshaping how hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy are perceived. This research will also contribute to academic knowledge, which will encourage more research and equip government agencies with the data they need to start developing policies, resources, infrastructure, and processes needed by hustlers to thrive.

Successful hustlers are a tremendous source of knowledge and expertise. As a result, this study aims to contribute to the scholarly and practitioner body of knowledge by seeking wisdom and knowledge from successful hustlers as well as reviewing literature in order to provide insight

and understanding of the tools, strategies, and knowledge hustlers must employ in their pursuit for success in hustlenomics. As a result, this research will not only assist hustlers in overcoming obstacles and providing a guide to the strategies and best practices required to be effective and successful in hustlenomics, but it will also enable hustlers to increase their chances of success by contributing to the hustleconomy's knowledge base.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions (RQ) were addressed in this study.

- RQ 1: What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 2: What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers who are engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 3: How do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success?
- RQ 4: Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful influencer hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because there is very little known about hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. Hence, this study helps to begin to reframe how hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy are perceived in order to illuminate their impact and importance to the overall economy. This study also provides hustlers with a guide that will enable them to increase their chances for success as they engage in hustlenomics. The guide is based on strategies and best practices derived from successful financially liberated hustlers that participated in the study.

Entities that work with or for hustlers, such as government agencies and officials, especially those tasked with the responsibilities of economic planning and labor, will benefit

from understanding the dynamics of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy and the best practices and strategies hustlers need to be effective. This is due to the fact that demographic data is used and thus determines economic policy, the establishment of suitable institutions, and the distribution of finances and resources. Thus far, little is known about hustlers, hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. So therefore, with the results from this study, government agencies and officials will be better equipped to carry out their responsibilities efficiently. Consequently, also benefitting the hustler community by helping them gain access to support, resources, infrastructure, institutions etc. that they need to thrive and booster their contribution to the economy.

This research will also contribute to literature by shedding light on the subject of hustlenomics, hustlers and the hustleconomy in academia. It will assist to raise awareness of an underserved demographic while also benefiting the academic community by expanding the body of research and analysis that aids in understanding how to derive best practices and tactics that will enable hustlers to succeed.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

The researcher assumes that all hustlers who engage in hustlenomics agree on a universal definition of success. The researcher also presumes that the study will demonstrate that the strategies and best practices that have helped the hustlers in the study succeed can be universally applied by other hustlers in their quest to be effective. Furthermore, the researcher assumes that the study's participants would answer the interview questions openly and honestly while holding their individual bias to a minimum.



## **Limitations of the Study**

This is a qualitative study that examines 12 influencer hustlers that engage in hustlenomics. The study reviewed the best practices and strategies that the 12 participating influencer hustlers utilized to attain success. This study is limited to the 12 influencer hustlers operating within the hustleconomy.

## **Definition of Terms**

*Hustle*: trade either legitimate or illegitimate conducted and driven by high energy and velocity (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d; Thieme et al., 2021.).

*Hustleconomy*: is a term used by the author to denote the hustle economy. The hustleconomy is an economic arena where hustlers produce, distribute, and consume goods and services in the attempt to earn a living (Thieme, 2013, 2017, 2018; Thieme et al., 2021)

*Hustlenomics*: is a term used by the author to denote the act of hustling. Hustlenomics is also the study, description, and analysis of the hustleconomy. It is the study that seeks to understand how goods and services are produced, distributed, and consumed and how hustlers, the individuals that participate in the hustleconomy earn a living.

*Hustledemic*: a term used by the author to connote the phenomenon of the expansion of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy

*Hustlers*: Individuals that earn an income through hustlenomics in the hustleconomy (Thieme, 2013, 2017, 2018; Thieme et al., 2021)

*Influencer marketing*: a type of social media marketing that takes place on sites like Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, Twitter, and YouTube. It is a type of marketing that depends on well-known people acknowledged as influencers to support, endorse, and promote for

businesses by posting sponsored content on their own social media accounts / platforms to their niche audience (Freberg et al., 2011; Glucksman, 2017; Ledbetter, 2016).

*Social media influencer:* is a well-known personality or figure who utilizes social media to cultivate a niche fanbase. Influencers are thought to be subject matter experts who can be trusted by their audience (Freberg et al., 2011; Glucksman, 2017; Ledbetter, 2016).

*Formal / traditional economy:* The formal economy is considered to be all economic activities that functions within the official parameters set in place by the government and thus adheres to the regulations of the official governmental authorities; hence, those within the formal economy participate in activities such as paying taxes and thus enjoy the benefits that comes from attaining access to government provided support and resources (Huynh & Nguyen, 2020; Medina & Schneider, 2018; Schneider, 2016).

*Emerging economy:* An economy of a less developed that attains some of the characteristics of a fully developed. It is characterized by broken institutional systems and infrastructures that is still being developed as the economy becomes more integrated with the global economy (Khanna & Palepu, 2010)

*Emerged economy:* An economy that is considered developed. Its institutions, systems, and infrastructure are fully developed and is an integrated member of the global economy (Khanna & Palepu, 2010)

*Work-on-demand:* Are traditional work such as janitorial, transport, administrative etc. that is directed and managed through online apps such as Task rabbit that is manage by a company that ensures service is deliver and a certain minimum quality standard of service is met (De Stefano, 2016; Bernhardt & Thomason, 2017).

## Chapter One Summary

The hustleconomy is rapidly expanding due to the hustledemic. The growth of the hustleconomy can be attributed to the copious apps and online platforms such as Amazon, Facebook, Instagram, Squarespace, Lyft, Fiverr, Tic Tok and YouTube that make it easier for hustlers, the individuals that engage in hustlenomics to sell their goods and services and reach their clientele. People across the globe are engaging in hustlenomics for a variety of reasons. Some are joining the hustleconomy for survival because they are unemployed or underemployed whereas others are participating in hustlenomics because they seek flexibility, freedom, wealth, space to explore their passion, craft etc. Thus, hustlers engaged in hustlenomics because they seek liberation either from their circumstances or to explore new and more opportunities.

Despite the growth of the hustleconomy, little is known about it. This in large part is due to the fact that the hustleconomy is typically seen by society as the economy of the poor, the illegitimate, and the emerging global south. This perception has severely limited the potential of hustlenomics because sectors such as academia does not study it. Hence because little is known of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy, sectors such as government agencies does not have the information needed to set policies, allocate resources and build infrastructure, systems etc. needed to empower the hustleconomy and the hustlers engaged in hustlenomics.

Accordingly, this study seeks to add to both the academic and practitioner knowledge base. This study seeks to reveal additional knowledge of the undercurrents of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. The purpose of this is to begin to reframe how hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy are perceived. The objective is that it will encourage further scholarly studies of hustlenomics and provide government agencies with the information needed to begin to develop policies, resources, infrastructure, systems etc. for the hustleconomy and the hustlers that engage

in hustlenomics. As a result, lessening the challenges hustlers endure while engaged in hustlenomics and thus empowering them to succeed.

Consequently, the objective of this study is to obtain a guide of the tools, strategies, and best practices developed through studying literature and identified successful hustlers that hustlers can employ on their journey towards liberation and success in hustlenomics.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The concept of hustle evokes a wide range of reactions; some embrace and glorify hustle as the do-it-yourself liberating economy (Clay & Phillips, 2015; Neuwirth, 2012; Thieme et al., 2021) while others see hustling as a negative occupational existence for an expanding working class of people who are struggling with job insecurity and thus are only able to take on unstable, casualized, short-term jobs (Thieme et al., 2021). Regardless of one's view of hustlenomics, one thing is universally accepted, struggle is the root cause and cornerstone of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy (Thieme et al., 2021). Thus, while the previous chapter centered on describing the current hustledemic of how technology has propelled the global expansion of the hustleconomy, this chapter will focus on reviewing existing literature that examines the struggle that has created and propelled hustlenomics. Also, this chapter will review literature to identify the characteristics of and the forces at play within the hustleconomy as well as the best practices and strategies employed by hustlers.

### **Humans are Social**

To fully comprehend the dynamics at play within the hustleconomy and the hustlers that engage in hustlenomics, it is vital to examine literature from the genesis of the story. Humans are social (Johnson & Taylor, 2011; Pagano, 2020; Wisman, 2014); thus, unlike most animals, humans cannot survive on their own. Rather, as Johnson and Taylor (2006) explain humans are socialized to learn and survive through interactions with one another. Hence, according to Wisman (2014), humans collaborate with each other to change aspects and resources derived from the natural world for producing items necessary for survival. Consequently, according to Pagano (2020), humans have survived because of human's unique social nature, which needs a

sophisticated division of labor and participatory production processes. It is for this reason, Wisman (2014) said humans lived as hunter-gatherers for the vast majority of human history, collaboratively utilizing resources provided by nature without private ownership, and it was only with the advent of the state and civilization around 5,500 years ago that private ownership of natural resources, capital, and labor became feasible.

Wisman (2014) goes on to explain that a small group of people, the elite of society own or control the resources. Thus, Wisman continues to elucidate that these elite members of society that own or control the resources give others who are the producers, the access they need to survive on the condition that the producers will turn over all output over the bare minimum to the elite owners. As a result, elites have utilized the state to safeguard, foster, and legitimize social institutions and ideology that have enabled them to take as much as possible of the producers' economic surplus (Marx, 1844/2016, 1867/1996; Marx & Engels, 1848/2015; Wisman, 2014). As a result, Wisman claims that different historical circumstances supported various exploitative systems such as feudalism and society's current mode of production, capitalism. Exploitative social systems allow elites to extract the surplus of the producers; accordingly, creating an outcome of economic injustice and the dehumanization of the producers (Marx, 1844/2016, 1867/1996; Marx & Engels, 1848/2015; Wisman, 2014).

According to Awan (2015), most of the global community has adopted capitalism. Governments as per Awan, have selected it because of its productivity and ability to maximize income and wealth through joint stock companies and corporations. Awan like Wisman, believes that capitalism, which is based on free market economics and profit maximization, triggered immense wealth concentration, social stratification, and income disparities in the hands of a small number of elite individuals during the previous two centuries. As a consequence,

inequality is an outcome of society's collective quest to survive and thus many of those who lack the ability to survive through society's current social mode of production, capitalism and live the life they desire have to hustle and thus the birth of hustlenomics (Thieme et al, 2016).

### **Capitalism and its Derivative, Inequality**

With Johnson and Taylor, Pagano, and Wisman's explanation of why humans are social and thus produce socially to survive, and Awan, Thieme, and Wisman's explanation of why inequality is an outcome of capitalism, it is vital to review additional literature to understand the meaning of and the characteristics of capitalism and its role in creating or not creating inequalities that push many individuals to hustlenomics. Capitalism is "an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Scholars such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and Milton Friedman have also attempted to define and describe the dynamics at play within capitalism.

Adam Smith is known as the father of capitalism and economics (Herzog, 2014; Parker, 1995; Weingast, 2018). Accordingly, as per Weingast (2018) Adam Smith's work has highly influenced and thus currents of his work can be found in the works of many great scholars such as Karl Marx, and Milton Friedman. Adam Smith is chiefly known for his contribution on the role of the enlightened self-interest which is also known as the Invisible Hand or Natural Law theory- Laissez-Faire theory which holds that the market should not be interfered with, the need of specialization in order to improve capital accumulation efficiency through the Division of Labor theory, and Law of Absolute Advantage which holds that everyone should do what he is best at (Smith, 1776/2000).

In his book the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith (1776/2000) holds that as each individual strives to maximize the value of his capital and although the individual has no intention of supporting the interest of society, in his pursuit for self-interest, the individual benefits society. This concept is the basis of the Invisible Hand or Natural Law theory. Furthermore, Adam Smith introduced the Division of Labor theory that suggest that people are persuaded by the motivation of earning more by specializing their work within a given established system of trade. Therefore, without governmental interference, individuals would inherently steer the market or economy in a manner that its output is of the utmost value. According to Smith, this increases the productivity of the economy consequently resulting in increased wealth for the individual and society. Smith maintained that shielding certain producers from the natural process of capitalism and free trade would result in inefficient output and thus raising prices. As a result, Smith alleged that the government's purpose is to safeguard its borders, enforce civil law, and engage in public services such as education, rather than to control or direct the economy.

There has been much debate in the academic arena about Adam Smith (Weingast, 2018). While scholars like Parker (1995) argue that Adam Smith's work is much more than economics and capitalism thus it is wrong to simply regard the *Wealth of Nations* as a book about economics, scholars like Herzog (2014) argues that Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is typically referred to with the aim of unearthing the nuclei of economic theories because Adam Smith is universally regarded as an economist. Nonetheless, the rhetorical structure of Adam Smith's work was summarized by Brown et al. (2004) as one that commences from first a conventional perspective about individuals instinctively growing their capital to second an account of the reasons European history did not follow this natural path, to third an analysis and rejection of other positions about how production and capitalism works, and only then, after the opposing



positions have been thoroughly disproved, Brown et al. state that Adam Smith declares that the palpable and essential solution for society is to increase production of goods.

According to Graafland and Wells (2021), Adam Smith is often seen as a proponent of an amoral or even anti-moral capitalist economy, in which the individual's self-interest is transformed into shared economic success by the Invisible Hand. However, Graafland and Wells (2021) argues that the distortion of Adam Smith's work has had a ubiquitous and undesirable impact on the conscience of how society's current mode of production, capitalism is studied and conducted. Hence, Graafland and Wells contends that this misrepresentation has firstly obstructed a diversity of research opportunities that an enhanced interpretation of the Wealth to Nations would extricate and secondly it sanctioned for weak arguments such as Milton Friedman (2007) in his book *The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits* to appear stronger than they really are. Rather, according to Alvey J. E. (1998), Adam Smith denounced faulty civilizations, praised successful ones, and suggested a comprehensive reform program based on his ideal society, which would fulfill the goals of human nature as he defined them. Adam Smith indicates, according to Alvey J.E. that society is led by unequivocal natural objectives such as self-preservation, species reproduction, order, happiness, and perfection, as well as an implicit goal of freedom.

For this reason, Alvey J. (1998) argues that Adam Smith's viewpoints and vision on the ideal society where individuals prosper are much richer and significantly more complicated than popular belief. According to Alvey J., this is attributable to Adam Smith's effort and vision, which advocates for comfortable preservation with significant procreation, complete global and national security which is necessary for maintaining order, and economic, political, and religious liberty. Alvey J. says that Adam Smith suggests that this brings enjoyment and perfection to the

vast majority of society and thus the goals of perfection, happiness, and liberty according to Adam Smith are not reducible to bourgeois concepts.

Karl Marx however argues against capitalism (Marx, 1844/2016, 1867/1996; Marx & Engels, 1848/2015). Marx is widely known for his collaborative publication with Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848/2015), and his publication *Das Kapital* (1867/1996). Marx's unpublished writings on Estranged Labor theory in The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 remained unpublished until 1944. In these writings, Marx borrows from Hegel's concept of alienation that people will become out of touch with the world they live in; however, Marx interprets this concept of alienation differently. Marx (1844/2016) explains that alienation stems from how the individual worker views their labor. As a result, Marx's fundamental critiques of capitalism in The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 are not that it is driven by greed and selfishness, but rather that capitalism is an alienating mode of production. So therefore, these manuscripts focused on the premise that private property, labor, and the ensuing results of labor belong to the capitalist.

According to Marx (1844/2016), there are four types of alienation based on the Estranged Labor theory. The first type of alienation, workers, as per Marx are alienated from the commodities derived from their labor; as a result, the worker does not own the products they produce; rather, the more the person produces, the less he or she has. Workers are alienated from the process of work, per the second type of alienation thus, Marx explains that labor is compelled and consequently inept to fulfill the worker; rather, it is merely a means to an end because the labor of the worker belongs to someone else, the capitalist. The third form of alienation, according to Marx, separates workers capacity and potential from their physical form; therefore, the worker's life is not about living but rather is an avenue to a physical existence. The fourth and

last sort of alienation is that which occurs when a person feels isolated from others. The worker is estranged from other workers, as per Marx, and thus the other degrees of alienation are represented in social connections.

As a consequence, Marx holds that alienation is a dearth of self-worth and deficiency of significance in one's life as a result of being forced to live a life devoid of self-realization, deprived of the possibility to become actualized, to become oneself. Marx asserts that workers can only exist on subsistence wages, compelling a revolution in which the government will seize all surplus property. Working within and essentially in a capitalist system of production, consistent with Marx, alienation characterizes the dehumanizing, sequestering, and disillusioning results of a capitalist mode of production. To overcome this alienation, Marx (1844/2016, 1867/1996) holds that society must solve the fundamental antipathy of the capitalist mode of production; consequently, reconciliation is defined as bringing what has been alienated, the worker's state and circumstance, back into concord, synchronization, and agreement. As a consequence, Marx believes that society requires a new production system which is found in communism because communism trounces the conundrums and power of private property ownership by removing private productive property, which eliminates alienation, a symptom of private property and capitalism.

The Communist League sanctioned the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848/2015) with the objective of announcing the party's contentions and platform. Marx and Engels (1848/2015) examined the Communists' chronicle of history and the relationship between the elite and the producer in the first part of the Communist Manifesto. The relationship between proletarians and Communists was explained in the second section. The third section covers the

inadequacies of past literature of socialists, and the final part examines the interaction between Communists and other political factions.

*The Communist Manifesto* is an endeavor by Marx and Engels to explicate both the ambitions of communism and the perspective that buttresses them. Marx and Engels propose that all historic progressions are propelled by class struggles arising from the bourgeoisie's exploitation of the proletarian class. Consequently Marx, and Engels contend that a period's means of production defines the class relationships of its era. Nonetheless, according to Marx and Engels, these ties will ultimately turn out to be unharmonious with the growing forces of production and a revolution will occur. Marx and Engels claim that it is at this time a new ruling class will materialize; this process illustrates the "March of History" (Marx and Engels, 1844/2015), as promoted by grander economic elements.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels (1844/2015) hold that class warfare between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is indicative of the industrial era. Nevertheless, Marx and Engels maintain that capitalism's productive aptitudes are precipitously becoming incongruous with this exploitative liaison. Subsequently, as per Marx and Engels, the revolution will be sparked by the proletariat. According to Marx and Engels, this revolution however will be disparate from all others because preceding revolutions simply redistributed capital in preference of the bourgeoisie. So therefore, Marx and Engels assert that members of the proletariat, on the other hand, will be unable to commandeer capital because of their social economic status or class. Hence, once the proletariat attains power, the bourgeoisie must jettison all private capital proprietorship, and thus class will be annihilated. In view of that, Marx, and Engels assert that this evolution is unavoidable because capitalism is intrinsically unbalanced and

it is for this reason the eradication of social classes cannot be accomplished through reforms or changes in administration; rather, it necessitates a revolution.

In *Das Capital*, Marx (1867/1996) defined the dynamism of capitalism and the processes at work between the concepts of capital, commodity, labor, and trade, as well as how they affect societies and the global environment. Marx goes on to list some of capitalism's limitations, including its troubling disruption of governments and political systems, as well as its exploitative nature. In *Das Kapital*, Marx claimed that the private ownership of property by the capitalist bourgeoisie had established a society founded on alienation, propelled forward by class conflict, toward dominance of the capitalist bourgeoisie over the global market. Marx further discusses how workers are exploited through the process of production or work; he maintained that capitalists buy laborers' aptitude to work and not their labor, and that in order to make a profit, the capitalist must extract 'surplus value' from its workers. Accordingly, Marx explains in *Das Kapital* that the capitalist makes money by exploiting his workers, whose low-wage labor is the primary source of profit; profits are derived from the surplus left over after the cost of production is deducted from income, and thus serve as the driving force behind capitalism, which is the basis of the Surplus Value theory.

Since the nineteenth century, Marx's writings have had a significant impact on socio-political economics and the way scholars' study it (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2015; Awan, 2015; Wood, 2016). According to Peet (1975), Marx theorized that the necessitous elements of capitalism are poverty and inequality. Consequently, Peet claims that capitalism inevitably results in inequitable social institutions and stratifications and thus, inequality is a derivative of capitalism that is assigned from one generation to the other due to the ecosystem of opportunities and services that each individual has access to. Peet goes on to explain that a locality's social

layout entails an order of community habitats that mirror the region's class arrangement. As a consequence of the system's continual requirement to amass and replicate an industrial "Reserve Army of Labor" (Engels, 1845/2005), Peet claims that vicissitudes in the system are engendered by variations in labor mandate that tolerate poverty to subsist in localities throughout the globe. Peet explains that the concept of a "Reserve Army of Labor", is comparable to a relative surplus population or an industrial reserve army with the allowance that the unemployed are individuals who are actively in quest of for work, while the relative surplus population includes those who are incapable to work. Accordingly, like Marx, Peet argues that devoid of significant amendments such as a revolution (Marx, 1844/2016, 1867/1996) poverty and inequity cannot be eradicated.

Acemoglu and Robinson (2015), like Peet, agreed with Marx that any economic expansion under capitalism will almost invariably result in increasing inequality because capitalists benefit while workers do not. Despite Marx's concentration on the forces of production, the function of agencies and administrations in manipulating economies and prices, and the trajectory of technology, Acemoglu and Robinson pointed out that Marx's theories were not always accurate since he disregarded endogenous technological growth. As per Acemoglu and Robinson, Marx's theories failed for the same reason that other economists' theories had failed. Acemoglu and Robinson further explains that Marx's theories were engendered in the endeavor to encapsulate the realities of his period into a series of ambitious theories that could be implemented at any specific period or locale, with minimal regard for establishments and the relatively institutionalized swaying character of technology.

However, unlike Peet and Acemoglu and Robinson, Calhoun (1983, 1992) disagrees with Marx. Calhoun believed Marx never developed a coherent explanation of how the proletarian

class will develop into the idiosyncratic representation for the proletariat. This is also the postulation Granberg (2021) stresses is the underlying argument for those that belongs to the well-known 'missing subject controversy' camp of scholars that argue against Marx's theories surrounding labor and the proletariat's revolution. Rather Granberg claims that modern forms of labor militancy can benefit from Marx's theory of worker subjectivity in three ways. To begin with, Granberg argues that Marx's analysis is concerned with real subjective dynamics rather than a meta-abstraction level. Second, Granberg holds that Marx draws proletarian individual identity from the conventional and pragmatic inclusion process as well as the social structure of labor power. Finally, in the framework of capital's postulating of social arrangements, history becomes appropriate and suitable. Accordingly, Granberg contends that, while Marx's analysis may be strewn and oblique, it offers fertile foundation for scholars to build on because of the way Marx identified and analyzed the fundamental determinants of proletarian experience.

Furthermore, Wood (2016) points out that Marx wrote nearly entirely about capitalism, with little mention of the socialist or communist society he aspired to replace. In other words, Wood highlights the fact that Marx focused on the limitations of capitalism but failed to explore what the new communist economy that is supposed to replace capitalism should look like. Nevertheless, Wood holds that although presently, capitalism is still alive and well, and though there are limitations in Marx's work, Marx's ideas about capitalism are more relevant to present social reality than we have any right to anticipate from 150-year-old text.

Milton Friedman was one of the most renowned proponents of free markets in the twentieth century (Landsburg, 2019; Shleifer, 2009; Wellington & Zandvakili, 2007). As per Wellington and Zandvakili (2007), Marx and Friedman both concurred that the capitalist system generates surpluses. Additionally, Wellington and Zandvakili hold that Marx and Friedman also

agreed about who really are the beneficiaries of the surplus; that is except for the names they call the beneficiaries of surplus; Marx considered them malicious capitalists whereas Friedman regarded them as most meritorious entrepreneurs. Beyond that, Wellington and Zandvakili acknowledged that there is not much agreement between both scholars.

Friedman's central argument is that business' social duty is to generate and increase its profits. Hence, his economic theories such as Monetarism, Price Theory, and the Quantity Theory of Money supported this stance. Friedman's initial significant contribution to economics was his Theory of the Consumption Function, published in 1957, which advocated for the premise that permanent changes in income, rather than transitory changes in income, have a greater impact on a person's spending and savings choices. Friedman (1957) claims that individuals and households modify their expenditure to meet their current income. Friedman goes on to highlight that people's annual expenditure is a function of their "permanent income," a term he cultivated for the predicted average income. Thus, according to Friedman, permanent changes in income, rather than transient modifications in income, have a higher impact on a person's expenditure and savings decisions. Furthermore, with this concept, Friedman argues that in the absence of all other factors, transitory tax increases shrink savings while sustaining expenditure levels.

Friedman's landmark work on Price Theory examines how market prices are determined. Friedman established the Quantity Theory of Money, which describes how the money supply affects price levels. Friedman (1956) asserted in *Studies in the Quantity Theory of Money* that more monetary growth contributes to greater prices in the long run but has essentially little influence on output. Increases in money supply growth, he claimed, contribute to greater employment and output in the short term, while drops in money supply growth have the reverse



impact. Thus, in his publication *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867 – 1960*, Friedman highlighted the importance of monetary policy in sparking and ostensibly, exacerbating the Great Depression.

In his 1962 collection of essays, "Capitalism and Freedom," Friedman declared that in a free economy, business has only one social responsibility; to use its resources and engage in activities that increase profits as long as it follows the rules of the game, that is, competes openly and honestly without deception or fraud. Friedman (1962) pushed for a volunteer army, freely floating currency rates, the elimination of doctor licensure, a negative income tax, and school vouchers, among other ideas, in his book *Capitalism and Freedom*. Friedman contends that government has three essential functions: military defense, contract enforcement, and protecting citizens from crimes committed against them or their property. Friedman claims that when the government tries to reorganize the economy, impose morals, or help special interests, society pays for it in inefficiency, lack of motivation, and loss of freedom. Thus, Friedman holds that rather than being a participant in the economic functions of society, the government should act as a referee. Friedman rose to notoriety and became a public figure in 1980 after co-authoring the book *Free to Choose* and hosting a television series based on the publication on public television with his wife, Rose Friedman.

Humanity has made great progress over the years. As per Shleifer (2009), wealth, education, and life expectancy have all increased, while infant mortality and poverty have decreased, and more countries within the global community are now democratic. It is for this reason, according to Shleifer, the world experienced prevalent implementation of free market policies in both mature and emerging market economies such as private ownership, free trade, responsible budgeting, and lower taxation. According to Shleifer, three significant events marked

the start of this period; first, Deng Xiao Ping began market reforms in China in 1979, which lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. Secondly as per Shleifer, Margaret Thatcher became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and thus instituted radical reforms which triggered a long period of economic growth. Finally, Shleifer explains that Ronald Reagan, a supporter of free market principles became the President of the United States. All three of these powerful global leaders, according to Shleifer, claimed to be inspired by Milton Friedman's thinking, and so it is only logical Shleifer explains to refer to the last 25 years of the twentieth century as the Age of Milton Friedman.

Similar to Shleifer, Elrick and Thies (2018) agreed with Friedman's perspective. Friedman's key point, according to Elrick and Thies, is that a corporation's social responsibility is to maximize profits. So therefore, Friedman, as per Elrick and Thies, maintain that businesses have only one social responsibility and that is to use their resources in a manner that would boost their profits. Friedman maintains that the essential objective of business is to produce goods and services at a profit, and that by doing so, business is providing its utmost contribution to society and, in reality, being socially responsible, according to Elrick and Thies. Friedman's perspective and therefore depiction has suffered from a "toxic misquotation," according to Elrick and Thies, and Friedman's position on corporate social responsibility has been reduced to a snappy slogan, which is wrong. Friedman added certain legal and ethical constraints to the pursuit of profit long before the contemporary concept of social responsibility of business was developed, according to Elrick and Thies, and Friedman embraced the Stakeholder Theory of the firm after the social responsibility of business crystallized as the Stakeholder Theory of the firm.

Friedman, according to Elrick and Thies (2018), thought that in the long term, ethical behavior is consistent with the pursuit of profit, and that scholarship, like business, should be

constrained by honesty. Scholars and critics of Friedman, Elrick and Thies argue have confused the issue of corporate social responsibility, refusing to discern between true theft and fraud, short-run profiting, and long-run profit maximization. As a result, Elrick and Thies suggest that critics of Friedman are conflating profit-seeking with surrendering to brief impulses and indulging in theft and fraud, effectively a critique against the market system. Thus, according Elrick and Thies, society and many individuals have suffered as a result of corporatism masquerading as capitalism.

Carroll and Shabana (2010) also contributed to the scholarly analysis of Friedman's perspective. Friedman's core assumption, according to Carroll and Shabana, is that social issues are not the responsibility of entrepreneurs and that these issues should be dealt with by the unrestrained intricacies of the free market system. In addition, Carroll and Shabana emphasize that Friedman's viewpoint maintains that if the free market is unable to address social issues, it is up to government and laws to do so. Thus, Carroll and Shabana explain that Friedman claims businesses fulfill their primary responsibility as economic units in society by producing goods and services that society wants and needs and selling them at a profit; in so doing, Friedman asserts businesses accomplish their main responsibility as economic units in society. As a result, Carroll and Shabana explain that Friedman asserts that the principle of profit maximization is supported by the classical economics perspective led by Friedman (1962), where business has only one social responsibility; to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase profits as long as it follows the rules of the game, that is, competes in an open and free market without deception or fraud.

The business case for corporate social responsibility (CSR), according to Carroll and Shabana (2010), is produced by establishing and demonstrating that CSR has a beneficial

economic effect on company financial performance. The wide view of the business case, according to Carroll and Shabana, draws attention to the nuances of the relationship between CSR and corporate financial success. Hence, Carroll and Shabana hold that mediating variables and situational contingencies influence the impact of CSR on business financial performance. As a result, according to Carroll and Shabana, the impact of CSR on firm financial performance is not always positive; rather, firms should understand the circumstances of various CSR activities and pursue those that demonstrate a convergence between the firm's economic objectives and society's social objectives. Carroll and Shabana argue that there can only be a market for virtue and a business case for CSR if enterprises are able to conduct CSR activities with the support of their stakeholders.

However, Pryor (2010) and Ashford (2010) disagree with Friedman's stance around free market capitalism and freedom. While there is a cross-sectional correlation between political freedom and capitalism, Pryor maintains that capitalism is neither a necessitous nor adequate condition for political freedom. Furthermore, Pryor holds that there is no corroboration that the opposite insinuation, that political freedom is an essential or adequate condition for capitalism. Furthermore, although freedom is of the utmost importance to Friedman, as per Ashford, Friedman does not appreciate that capital ownership is required for freedom. Furthermore, despite acknowledging that one must be able to earn a living in order to exercise genuine political freedom, Ashford contends that Friedman demonstrates no knowledge of the difficulties most people face in earning a living. As a consequence, Ashford holds that Friedman overlooks the fact that after eight hours of work, commute time, meal preparation, eat, clean, raise a family, and hopefully pay the bills, the vast majority of individuals within society have minimal time and energy left to participate in effective advocacy of robust citizenship that is required for

democracy. As a result, while everyone has political rights in theory, Ashford (2010) contends that the effective ability to exercise them is strongly tied to wealth distribution.

Ashford goes on to suggest that in promoting freedom as the greatest ideal, Friedman overlooks the fact that as of 2010, around 1% of the population owns 50% of the capital wealth, while 10% hold 90%. As a result, according to Ashford, the other 90%, who possess little or no capital and half of whom have a negative net worth, have little or no time for smart politics as they compete for the last 10% of wealth. It is for this reason Ashford argues that the private ownership of wealth, along with the reality that practically all new capital is obtained with capital earnings, leaves little chance for universal individual liberty based on Friedman's understanding of free markets.

In summation, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.), capitalism is a system in which private individuals or companies hold capital assets, investments are made privately, and prices, output, and distribution of goods and services are largely determined by competition in a free market. To obtain a better grasp of capitalism's characteristics and the processes within it, the works of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and Milton Friedman, three of the most influential economists was examined. It was discovered that Smith's argument is based on the notion that each person strives to increase the value of his assets in his pursuit of self-interest, and that by doing so, the individual helps the economy. Smith also presented the Division of Labor theory, which states that individuals are compelled by the desire to generate more revenue by specializing their labor, and that without government involvement, people would innately guide the market in the direction of the most valuable output. The government's mission, according to Smith, should be to protect its territory, execute the established law, and provide public services rather than to manage or guide the economy.

Marx and Friedman's work were built on the foundation of Smith's ideas. Wellington and Zandvakili, highlighted the fact that Marx and Friedman concurred that the main pursuit of capitalist efforts is to yield surpluses, and both Marx and Friedman agreed who the true recipients of the surpluses are. Beyond that, there is not much agreement between Marx and Friedman. That is because Marx views capitalism as an evil system that generates surpluses for the elites by alienating the producers and thus creating inequality between the owners of capital and the producers. Friedman on the other hand sees free market capitalism as an excellent space for entrepreneurs to make money and the only obligation of a business is to utilize its capital to yield maximum profit or surplus. Thus, though social issues such as inequality exist, these quandaries are the responsibilities of other entities such as the government and not the business owner.

Upon reviewing the literature of Adam Smith, Karl Marx , and Milton Friedman and the works of scholars such as Acemoglu and Robinson, Alvey, J, Alvey J.E., Ashford, Awan, Calhoun, Carroll and Shabana, Elrick and Thies, Brown et al., Graafland and Wells, Granberg, Herzog, Landsburg , Parker, Peet, Pryor, Shleifer, Weingast, Wellington and Zandvakili, and Wood, that have analyzed the works of Smith, Marx and Milton, it is discovered that all the scholars assent that inequality exist. Additionally, also it is deduced that they are all in agreement that inequality could be a consequence or creation of capitalism. However, where they disagree is whose responsibility it is to address the disparities created by the derivatives or byproduct of capitalism, inequality. Thus, for the sake of this research, it is important to highlight that literature shows that all the scholars reviewed acknowledge the existence of inequality and that it could be a byproduct or derivative of capitalism. Accordingly, before going any further, it is compulsory to review additional literature to obtain a better understanding of what inequality means.

## **What is Inequality**

To fully comprehend the connections between inequality and hustlenomics, it is essential to understand equality. Amartya Sen gave his Tanner Lecture called "Equality of What?" in 1980. This talk elicited a dynamic discussion among scholars such as Dworkin (1981, 1989a & b, 2000, 2002, 2011), and Arneson (1989), and Cohen (1989), about what constitutes equality and inequality. During this lecture, Sen (1980) addressed how the Capability Approach, a framework he devised, might be used to assess an individual's welfare. The Capability Approach is effective in assessing inequality since it focuses on an individual's aptitude and liberty to live the life they desire. Sen examines and criticizes the three conventional methods to understanding equality at that time which included Utilitarian Equality, Total Utility Equality, and Rawlsian Equality.

Sen (1980) explained that the three conventional methods to understanding equality associate well-being to wealth which he explained refers to income or belongings, utility which pertains to fulfillment and attaining what one ambitions, or access to essential social goods which relates to access to basic liberties and goods. Sen expounded that each of the three conventional methods to understanding equality are defective, and that amalgamating the methodologies does not offer a sufficient structure for appreciating particularized advantage.

Sen defined Utilitarian Equality as the application of the conventional economic concept of marginal utility to identify the fairest distribution of commodities, while considering the fact that how those goods are divided can be a causative influence in the number of those items. Sen goes on to explain that Utilitarian Equality is comprehensive in scope since it concentrates on optimizing total utility. As a result, Sen asserts that Utilitarian Equality only functions if everyone has the identical utility function, which he believes is impossible, and thus he deemed

Utilitarian Equality as defective. Furthermore, Sen highlights another flaw of Utilitarian Equality that individuals experiencing difficulty or are vulnerable could potentially be penalized.

Total Utility Equality is defined as welfarism by Sen. Sen claims that under Total Utility Equality, the functionality of the worse off individual should be increased. Sen criticizes Total Utility Equality for being indifferent to the number of requirements since Total Utility Equality supports the highest equal allocations of commodities, in spite of the quantity of individuals concerned or individual functionalities.

According to Rawlsian Equality, everyone possesses an equivalent demand to a complete and adequate set of basic rights and liberties (Rawls, 2005). Sen maintains that the Rawlsian approach is unsatisfactory because it fails to understand the basic disparities between individuals. With this in mind, Sen (1980) asserts that all three conventional methods to conceptualizing equality, are either incomplete or insufficient to explain for all of society's ethical concerns. Hence, Sen proposes an alternative framework for thinking about equality which he calls basic Capability Equality. This approach Sen claims focuses on a person's ability to function, achieve, and maintain basic welfare activities such feed themselves and participate in community life.

Sen argues that it is critical to acknowledge societal diversity and individual demands that is influenced by a variety of circumstances such as locality, environmental circumstances, health etc. Accordingly, Sen contends that each individual's utilization of commodities will likewise vary due to the fact that each individual's needs differ. As a consequence, Sen proposes the Capability Approach, which examines an individual's aptitude to utilize the commodities, services, and prospects obtainable to them. Capabilities, according to Sen, are determined by an individual's capacity and their living conditions. Additionally, Sen holds that some capabilities are ubiquitous while others are culturally distinctive.



Dworkin, Arneson, and Cohen continued the dialogue initiated by Sen in his seminal Tanner Lecture called "Equality of What?" and are thus significant contributors in the scholarly debate. In his work *Sovereign Virtue*, Dworkin (2000) advocates a theory he calls "Equality of Resources." This theory combines two key ideas; the first is that human beings are responsible for the life choices they make and the second is that natural endowments of intelligence and talent are morally arbitrary and ought not to affect the distribution of resources in society. Dworkin's Theory of Equality is underpinned by the core principle that every person is entitled to equal concern and respect in the design of the structure of society.

When the concepts of self-respect and provenance are combined, they form a definition of individual dignity (Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2012). These concepts are prevalent in Dworkin's work in varying ways as ethical principles which are what people need to live well, moral principles which are what people owe each other, and political principles which are the requirements for a government's legitimacy and the expectations of justice that individuals can make on one another (Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2012; Dworkin, 1981, 1989 a & b, 2000, 2002, 2011). The two principles ascertain individuals within society's privileges and obligations in what is designed to be a continuous network of interconnected and mutually reinforcing demands across various realms of ethics, morality, and politics (Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2012). Dworkin (2011) argues that individuals must be accountable for their life and thus must accept the importance of a successful life rather than an unexploited opportunity. Dworkin goes on to suggest that each individual has a special, personal responsibility for determining what is considered success in their life and is accountable in creating that successful life through a coherent narrative or style that they endorse.

Furthermore, Dworkin (2000) argues that an equitable distribution of resources necessitates the existence of an economic market in some form, primarily as a tool for analysis but also, to some extent, as a political organization, as a result, the market functions as an efficiency apparatus or as an underwriter of liberty. Dworkin goes on to argue that any appealing theoretical development of resource equality must include the concept of an economic market as a vehicle for fixing prices for a wide range of commodities and services. Dworkin (2011) claimed in his book *Justice for Hedgehogs* that a free market is not the adversary of equality, as is commonly assumed, but is necessary for genuine equality. As a result, Dworkin believes that using the concept of the market to explain the goal of equality is crucial.

The key point of Arneson's (1989) argument is that equal opportunity for welfare is the optimal definition of the equality. Hence, according to Arneson, in order to achieve equality, the distribution agencies must offer everyone a portion of assets that is precisely the same as everyone else's and thus depleting all existing resources. Arneson claims that Dworkin, believes that an equitable distribution of resources ethic should include human abilities as one of the resources to be provided. This belief, according to Arneson, has problems since it is unfeasible for a distributive agency to provide scholastic and technological resources that will compensate for innate variations in skill in such a way that everyone is gifted with the same capabilities. Furthermore, Arneson argues that it is indeed vague how much recompense is due to people who are disadvantaged due to a lack of aptitude. It is for this reason that Arneson claims that Dworkin has recognized the fault in his own reasoning, which he has properly dubbed talent slavery. The weakness with Dworkin's argument, according to Arneson, is that under this equitable distribution of talent system, those with greater potential are put at a disadvantage in comparison to people with minimal talent.

According to Arneson (1989), if each member of society fervently aspires sovereignty in the proprietary over one's time, body, and life, the individual with greater potential will discover that his discernment for liberty is incredibly extortionate whereas the individual with minimal talent will observe that his perspicacity for freedom is indeed economical. Consequently, Arneson claims that under this rendering of equality of resources, if two individuals who are otherwise indistinguishable excluding the fact that one attains greater potential and talent than the other, the individual with greater potential talent will discover it is far more challenging to achieve their life ambitions than the individual with minimal talent and potential. As a result, Arneson claims that once the consequences of equality are established, equality of resources appears to be an objectionable definition of the concept of equality.

Furthermore, Arneson (1989) contends that Dworkin's premise that each individual is accountable for their choices is erroneous since, even if adopted, it does not support resource equality. Arneson claims that social and natural dynamics influence choice, and that since societal members can only be considered accountable for what is within their influence, then members of society can only be considered partially responsible for their choices. For instance, Arneson points out that it is impossible to hold an individual who possesses no legs responsible for developing a whole framework of purposes and goals for which their absence of legs is not a disadvantage. Agreement with Dworkin's argument, Arneson contends, keeps his initial objection against equality of resource intact, because if people are sometimes responsible, then they are also sometimes not.

Dworkin's argument is also rejected by Cohen (1989) because it contradicts its own fundamental objective. Arneson's work advocating for Equality of Opportunity for Welfare impacted Cohen's answer to Dworkin. Although essential commodities are replaced by resources

in the Dworkinian refinement of the Rawlsian argument, Cohen claims that Dworkin refines and extends both Rawlsian objections of Equality of Welfare. Much of Dworkin's critique of Equality of Welfare will be met, according to Cohen, if egalitarians allow deviations from Equality of Welfare that reflect people's choices; that is, Arneson's Equal Opportunity for Welfare theory. However, Cohen contends that some of Dworkin's objections to Equality of Welfare cannot be addressed in Arneson's approach, and that the proper solution is to affirm what Cohen refers to as equal access to advantage, where advantage is defined to include, but not be limited to, welfare. The essential contrast for an egalitarian in the shaping of people's destinies under equal access to opportunity is between choice and luck. Dworkin's different master distinction, between desires and resources, according to Cohen, is less genuine to the impetus of Dworkin's own philosophy than the one Cohen prefers.

Cohen's response to Sen's work, on the other hand, is not one of Arnesonian rhetoric. Sen identified two approaches of evaluating an individual's situation under the umbrella concept Capability, according to Cohen (1989). Cohen continues by explaining that both aspects of evaluation should elicit equal interest, but only one of them deserves the moniker Capability. Cohen claims that identifying the other aspect makes a substantial influence on normative knowledge, but that aspect is difficult to discern in Sen's explanation since it is not well characterized in the vocabulary of Functioning and Capability that Sen employed to rationalize it.

According to Cohen (1989), Capability was utilized to illustrate two entities, one of which was larger than the other, and Capability was not the best name for the larger one. For this reason, Cohen explains that capabilities were thus equated with what things do to or for individuals within society, in alienation from the benefit they impart on them; however, this

classification was inappropriate. Even when usefulness is ignored, it is inaccurate, according to Cohen, that all commodities do for people is bestow capability, that this is the most important thing they do for them, or that this is the only thing they do for them that is important from an egalitarian standpoint. It is for this reason according to Cohen; Sen missed the actual dimensions and extent of one of the dimensions he had discovered while titling his concept Capability Equality.

On the other hand, Cohen (1989) argues that it is erroneous that an individual's contextually significant influence on his essential commodities is only dependent on his mental attitude to everything they do for him. Hence, Cohen asserts that welfarists overlook what commodities do for the individual, what the individual gets out of the commodities, in addition to his mental reaction to or personal judgment of the commodities. As a consequence, Cohen agrees with Sen that while evaluating an individual's welfare, the individual's condition, or situation in isolation from its value must also be analyzed. Hence, Cohen contends that the posterior to having goods and prior to having utility must be considered. For instance, according to Cohen, nutrient level must be examined, not merely food availability, as Dworkin do, or the benefit an individual obtains from eating food, as welfarists do.

In summary, the Equality of What debate is presents a significant approach to defining the concepts of equality and inequality. Sen initiated the dialogue with his Tanner talk during which he argued that it is important to recognize that people's capability to attain the life they desire is impacted by their circumstances and thus since not all circumstances are the same, for instance, some individual's circumstances might be more favorable than others, each person's use of resources will differ. Sen introduced the Capability Approach, which looks at a person's faculty to consume the resources, services, and opportunities that are available to them. Thus, it

is deduced from this talk that Sen's stance is that equality of circumstances does not exist because some individuals will have more resources and more favorable circumstances than others.

This might be because as Wisman (2014) explained ever since the privatization of resources 5,500 years ago, society's mode of production has created the circumstance that the elites, those individuals in society that have and control capital and thus ensures they maintain their position of advantage have limited the access of the producers, those individuals that have limited or no capital. Furthermore, some circumstances, the individual has control over such as utilizing the resources the person has access to for an obtainable opportunity and others circumstance the individual has no control over such as environment, inheritance, access to opportunity or resource etc. However, with the Capability Approach one can begin to assess an individual's ability to utilize the resources available towards the prospects that is obtainable. Thus, one can say inequality then dwells in the circumstances that is out of the control of the individual.

Sen's stance sparked the input of other scholars including Dworkin, Arneson, and Cohen to contribute. Dworkin whose stance is similar to that of Friedman's school of thought and thus argues that people are responsible for their life choices and that natural endowments such as talent and intelligence are indeterminate. Thus, the free market should be allowed to serve as an optimization instrument or as a guarantee of freedom. Hence, similar to Friedman, Dworkin's stance is the concept of equality of resources and circumstances is illogical and subjective; rather, the individual's responsibility is to use the resources that she / he has to create the life she / he desires. However, for the sake of this research, it is important to highlight that Dworkin does acknowledge the existence of inequality of circumstances.

Arneson and Cohen, however, disagree with Dworkin's position. Arneson (1989) argues equality of resources appears to be an unacceptable formulation of the idea of equality because the working premise that each individual is responsible for their decisions is incorrect because it does not support resource equality. Furthermore, Arneson highlights that societal and natural undercurrent influence choice, and since individuals can only be responsible for what they can control, people can only be held partially liable for their decisions. Cohen's approach to refute Dworkin's stance was a bit different from that of Arneson because Cohen argued that a person's welfare, as well as their circumstance independent from its worth, necessities rumination. Subsequently, Cohen asserts that the time between owning resources and having usefulness of the resources must be considered.

Nevertheless, the fundamental concept that stemmed out of the Equity of What debate by Sen, Dworkin, Arneson, and Cohen, around equality, is that the outcomes that are valued by members of society such as wealth, income, health, education, and other advantages, are influenced by two classifications of influences; those which the individual can be held accountable, and those which the individual cannot. For this reason, as Brunori et al. (2013) appropriately explains, inequalities for which an individual can be found responsible should be classified as efforts and are universally permissible. Those caused by conditions for which the individual is not accountable, and which are beyond the individual's control are classified as circumstances by Brunori et al. and should in principle be addressed and eliminated because it is unfair and thus unjust. In light of this, it is critical that further literature be reviewed in order to gain a deeper understanding of the origins of inequality and why it persists.

## **Inequality's Origin and Why it Persists**

Since its emergence as a new economic system, Wisman (2014) asserts that capitalism has been accused of producing inequality, poverty, devalued and alienated work, economic insecurity, erosion of community, self-centered people, and environmental destruction. Thus, Wisman argues that skeptics often associate repudiation of capitalism with disapproval of its central frameworks and institutions of markets and private property. However, Wisman contends that most of the significant problems identified by critics are due to the inequality that has co-evolved with these frameworks and institutions permitting elites to use them to exploit workers and damage the environment. As a result, Wisman suggests that many critics propose eliminating the entire institutional framework of capitalism, since they conflate the methods with the problem.

Wisman goes on to argue that inequality has always been a feature of capitalism because it grew with the development of two new classes, one possessing and dominating the means of production and the other being deprived of everything except the opportunity to work. So, Wisman explains that income and privilege inequality are the product of this particular type of wealth inequality and serve to sustain it. As a result, excessive inequality in ownership and control of the means of production, according to Wisman, is one of capitalism's negative repercussions. This is the most basic kind of inequity in the ownership and control of productive assets; consequently, Wisman asserts that the characteristics of capitalism have been shared by society since the dawn of civilization, albeit in different forms. As a result, Wisman maintains that it is due to the fact that a small number of elites own and control the means of production, while they disproportionately dominate state authority and exploit it to safeguard their capacity to take the maximum possible surplus from the workers.



Muller (2013) on the other hand explains that private property, the exchange of goods and services by free individuals, and the use of market mechanisms to govern the production and distribution of those commodities and services are all hallmarks of capitalism. Muller maintains that prior to capitalism, people's choices and fates were dominated by traditional customs that subjected them to varied social, political, and religious frameworks. These customs Muller asserts limited transformation of society and thus prevented people from making significant development but also shielding them from many of life's vicissitudes. However, with the introduction of capitalism, Muller claims that people now have more liberty and responsibility over their lives, and thus leaving room for both advancement and regression.

Muller goes on to argue that capitalism has created an ever-increasing number of options for human potential development. Hence, Muller suggests that while capitalism has increased chances for the development of human potential, not every member of society has been able to fully use those opportunities or advance significantly once they have had the opportunity to seize it. Hence, Muller argues that statutory and informal hurdles to equality of opportunity have traditionally prevented women, minorities, and the poor from fully benefiting from all that capitalism has to offer. Nonetheless, despite Muller's claim that capitalism has created a growing number of possibilities for human potential development, Muller also agrees that inequality does exist due to the explicit and unwritten barriers to equality of opportunity that have historically kept women, minorities, and the poor from thriving.

Thus, as Muller explains, capitalism comes with the economic liberalization that has helped hundreds of millions of individuals and families in places such as China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, and other emerging economies to break the cycle of poverty and become middle class economies. Furthermore, Muller claims that consumers in emerged capitalist countries like the

United States have also benefited from capitalism because it has seen a dramatic drop in the price of various commodities such as clothes, electronics, etc., as well as the availability of new goods that have completely revolutionized the way of life of members of their society. All of this progress, however, has been overshadowed by capitalism's enduring traits of inequality and insecurity, according to Muller.

However, Hodgson (2016) argues that inequalities of inheritance also account for much of the disparities prevalent in capitalist nations. Hodgson further elaborates that the cycle is continuous, with wealth disparities frequently driving inequalities in education, economic influence, power, and income gaps. As a result, Hodgson contends that capitalism exacerbates inherited inequalities of class, ethnicity, and gender by providing more options for profit generating to those that have access to inherited wealth while simultaneously exaggerating distinctions based on location or aptitude. Thus, Hodgson holds that capitalism can boost positive feedbacks that further magnify these inequalities, partly through the operation of markets but Hodgson also holds that the root causes of inequality is not capitalism per se and thus can be found elsewhere. As a consequence, Hodgson maintains that criticizing capitalism, its institutions, and its markets for inequalities of achievement or failure is akin to condemning the water for drowning a vulnerable swimmer.

Hodgson (2016) maintains that capital and not markets, is the primary source of inequality under capitalism. Hodgson applies a different definition of capital from that of Marx (1996, 2015, 2016); he defines capital as money, or the realizable money-value of possessed and collateralizable property. This is due to the fact that Hodgson claims paid workers are not slaves, they are unable to use their lifespan facility for work as collateral for loans. Workers' commercial freedom, according to Hodgson prevents them from using their labor assets or talents as

collateral while on the other hand, capitalists can profit from their property and use it as collateral to attain credit, invest, and earn even more surplus or profits. As a result, Hodgson claims that the discrepancies between individuals with and without collateralizable assets, as well as between different quantities of collateralizable wealth and assets aggregates hence, even when workers obtain assets, the wealthy is still ahead.

Inequality is primarily caused by unequal capital ownership, which can be either private or public (Alvaredo, 2018). According to Biondi and Olla (2020), wealth concentration and the financial investment process through financial markets are linked. Biondi and Olla go on to say that even efficient financial markets, which imply a fair investment game that individual investors play over time, are characterized by increasing inequality and maximum wealth concentration. As a result, Biondi and Olla argue that the process of capital accumulation is a major contributor to increased economic and societal inequality. This benefit is based on the unique ability to systematically reinvest financial advantages from that capital investment, compounding financial returns, rather than on the fact that capital investment is compensated as a productive element.

Inequality and intergenerational persistence are closely connected across countries (Becker et al., 2018). According to Brunori et al. (2020), a significant amount of the current global inequality cannot be traced to disparities in individual effort or responsibility; rather, exogenous elements such as family background, gender, ethnicity, birthplace etc., can be directly attributed to it. Brunori et al. argue that inequality of opportunity and income inequality have a positive relationship and thus like individuals, countries with a higher level of income disparity also have a higher level of opportunity inequality. Brunori et al. go on to explain that inequality of opportunity is the factor that connects economic inequality and social mobility. Hence,

Brunori et al. hold that if escalating inequality makes intergenerational mobility challenging; it is due to the fact that economic prospects are unequally apportioned among society's members.

Accordingly, Brunori et al. hold that lower mobility, on the other hand, influences the perpetuation of inequality by engendering disparities in opportunity between the prosperous and the underprivileged.

According to Corak (2013), a young individual's family history has a larger influence in shaping their future outcomes, whereas their individual diligent effort has a smaller impact. Hence, Corak argues that rising income disparity can hinder upward social mobility, making it more difficult for brilliant and hardworking people to receive the advantages they deserve. Furthermore, Corak claims that in regions with high inequality, intergenerational incomes mobility tends to be poor. Corak argues that this is due to the fact that higher inequality affects opportunity and reduces intergenerational mobility. It is for this reason as per Corak, inequality is more prevalent in regions where a bigger proportion of economic advantage and disadvantage is passed down from parents to their children.

Thus, Corak (2013) maintains that the dynamics and interactions between families, labor markets, and government policies collectively shape a child's possibilities and hence establish the amount to which adult income is linked to family history, but in diverse ways across national and global contexts. Therefore, Corak argues that both cross-regional evaluations and underlying trends infer that these factors are all fabricated to moderate, or at minimum does not boost, intergenerational income mobility for the next generation in a more fragmented labor market. As a result, Corak suggests that this tendency will definitely remain except public policy adjustments are constructed to develop children's human capital in a way that favors the relatively disadvantaged more. Corak goes on to argue that the considerable growth in the

income apportionments of the top 1% of society, their access to resources of high-quality human capital investment for their children, and the intergenerational transmission of employers and wealth, indicate a considerable rate of transfer of economic advantage at the very top of the socio-economic ladder of society in a manner that one will recognize as substantiation of opportunity inequality.

When it comes to regional inequalities, Corak (2013) claims that countries with higher income inequality are also more likely to transfer a greater distribution of economic advantage and disadvantage to their descendants. Inequality, Corak asserts depresses mobility because it influences opportunity and thus heightens the income consequences of innate particularities between individuals. Hence, Corak goes to argue that it also alters opportunities, motivations, and institutions that create, cultivate, and convey characteristics and competences appreciated in the labor market. Subsequently, Corak maintains that inequality alters the power equilibrium so that some groups which is usually the elite 1% are in the position to develop and establish policies or support their children's success regardless of their child's capabilities. It is for this reason, Corak holds inequality of outcomes should hold equal concern with society as inequality of opportunity but only to the degree that these variations in outcomes are linked to differences in conditions.

Corak (2013) argues that there are three types of situations in which parents can offer their children an edge. The first situation as per Corak, parents may impart economic advantages to their children through their social network that eases admittance to specific schools, employment availability, or availability to other human capital resources. Secondly, Corak argues that parental characteristics such as intrinsic capabilities, temperament, and some health characteristics that are valued in the labor market may be passed down through the generations.

Thirdly, Corak claims that parents impact their children's overall income prospects through family culture and other monetary and nonmonetary assets that mold talents, propensities, convictions, and attitude. Furthermore, when it comes to equal opportunity, Corak claims that people favor policies that ensure a fair system in access to education and employment, and thus are less inclined to take actions to counter hereditary advantages and are undecided about what actions to take to offset within-family investments. Corak contends that determining which instances should be mitigated by policy measures, and hence the portion of family economic advantage passed on to children that is consistent with equality of opportunity, is a moral judgement that different nations and societies may make differently.

Jerrim and Macmillan (2015) also claim that families with more financial resources have more financial resources to invest in their children's development, as well as more desire to do so when the economic rewards on external factors like schooling are significant. As a result, Jerrim and Macmillan suggest that if financial resources are the principal determinant of intergenerational advantage transfer, inequality and external determinants like intergenerational mobility's education component should be closely related. Hence, as per Jerrim and Macmillan, while both financial and nonfinancial resources are decisive in the intergenerational transfer of advantage, economic means seem to be more probable to be the main motivation why economic inequality is linked to mobility. As a result, Jerrim and Macmillan argue that affording pertinent financial resources to families is essential in indemnifying that everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive. Furthermore, Jerrim and Macmillan go on to explain that even in a society with perfect markets and no disparities in innate talent, affluent parents spend more on their children than poorer parents because they have access to the resource. For this reason, as per Jerrim and Macmillan, economic position at the top of societal wealth and income distribution is

more stable than at the bottom. However, credit constraints on the other hand, as per Jerrim and Macmillan, may result in a higher level of persistence among disadvantaged populations. Hence, low intergenerational mobility at both ends of the economic spectrum, according to Jerrim and Macmillan, is thus justified by their argument.

Jerrim and Macmillan (2015) argue that income inequality is elevated and escalating in emerged market economies because families with more financial resources have greater capacity to invest in their children's development and greater motivation to do so when economic returns to education are immense. Consequently, according to Jerrim and Macmillan, if financial resources is an essential component of the intergenerational advantage transfer, then income inequality and the through education component of intergenerational mobility should have a strong relationship. Hence, Jerrim and Macmillan suggest that although both financial and nonfinancial resources are contributors to intergenerational advantage transfer, financial resources is the leading motivator behind the link between income disparity and mobility. It is for this reason, Jerrim and Macmillan argue that necessitating that families have ample access to financial resources for instance through condensing the income allocation, may be essential in guaranteeing that younger generation have equal opportunities to flourish.

In summation, there is no contention by all scholars reviewed that inequality exists and that it is a derivative or byproduct of capitalism. Rather the contention lies in whether the benefit of capitalism is more significant than its unfortunate derivatives such as inequality. Scholars such as Marx and Wisman argue that capitalism is evil and is built on the alienation and suffering of the producers whereas scholars such as Friedman and Muller contend that although it is unfortunate that inequality and poverty does stem from the processes of capitalism, the benefits that has been attained from capitalism outweighs these unfortunate circumstances.

The review of literature reveals that inequality originates through unequal capital ownership (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016; Wisman, 2014). Furthermore, it is also discovered that there are three significant ways in which inequality persists; inheritance (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016), capital accumulation (Biondi & Olla, 2020) and income disparity/ social mobility (Corak, 2013; Jerrim & Macmillan, 2015). As a consequence, those that suffer from inequality struggle (Thieme, 2013, 2017). So, it is imperative to review additional literature to define struggle, to unearth the role inequality has played in the creation of struggle, and how this connects to the hustleconomy and the hustlers that participate in hustlenomics.

### **Struggle as the Cornerstone of Hustle**

So, how does inequality lead to struggle, and how does struggle relate to hustle? Struggle, according to Thieme (2013, 2018) is steeped in historical legacy and have two definitions in today's society. Firstly, according to Thieme struggle is a derivative of structural barriers to economic opportunity engendered by pervasive inequality of urbanization. Secondly, Thieme claims that struggle connotes both an active manner of struggle and opportunities; it is a concept that conveys a present political syntax of the disadvantaged affirming iterations of struggle; these struggles are exhibited in everyday attempts to make a living and proclamations of connectedness in metropolitan areas where the majority of the population is. Hence, Thieme (2018) holds that free market capitalism, informality, and precarity are three themes that provide rational analytical frames for constructively grappling with modern social, political, economic, and cultural phenomena including systems of inequality, power, and exclusion. However, these concepts have the potential to as per Ganti (2014) to obfuscate ethnographic characteristics and thus according to Millar (2018) do not contribute to illustrating or recognizing ordinary non-



normative economic and social actions outside of labor relations and conventional establishments.

Accordingly, Myers (2011) explains that informality refers to activities that occur outside of state control. Rizzo (2017) defines precarity as amplified labor uncertainty. Thusly, the three concepts in understanding social, political, economic, and cultural phenomena including systems of inequality, power, and exclusion that has created the struggle of the disadvantage collectively reveal what is not happening (Roitman, 1990), but according to Thieme (2017) they do not always provide the conceptual tools to understand and describe what is actually happening in these ostensibly negative spaces of struggle.

Thus, hustling, according to Thieme et al. (2021), is a form of rebellion to the outcomes that stems from capitalism, which has systematically produced wealth and profit through resource extraction and the quest to increase profits of the elites, as well as annexing value from business rationalities of cooperation and recipience of underserved populations. Thieme et al go on to explain that hustling is a derivative of elitist capitalism that was instigated from urban marginalization and a lack of investment in infrastructure, resources, and opportunities, all of which overwhelmingly impact disadvantaged populations. As a result, Thieme (2017) asserts that the methods and manifestations of hustling are entrenched in specific approaches of conducting commerce in order to struggle against long term stratified and disjointed rural and urban planning, as well as varying variations of exclusion, influenced by particular elitist dynamics and phenomena of capitalism in emerging market economies and underserved rural and urban areas in emerging market economies. Nonetheless, Thieme argues that concepts such as hustling in marginalized communities convey the complexities of ongoing struggle and the manner in which marginalized members of society express their liberty to survive with and

struggle through a slew of economic, political, and social barriers. Indeed, hustling, according to Thieme, insinuates an agentive struggle in the face of adversity, where opportunism, playfulness, intense perseverance, and what Vigh (2006) denotes as "social navigation" develop certain rationales and regional creative adaptative methodologies.

The disadvantage has always vocalized their struggle and need to engage in hustlenomics not only through scholarly publications but also through art such as music and drama. According to Fredericks (2014) art and activism have become an essential conduit for storytelling of the disadvantage. Fredericks goes on to explain that art such as music and drama is a language of resistance that challenges historical and enduring systems of discrimination and injustice. While part of this struggle language conjures the claims of disadvantaged groups such as youth, women, and minorities to the positioning of anticipation, expectancy, or being trapped as they withstand struggle rooted in economic hardship paired with ongoing social constraints (Honwana, 2012; Sommers, 2012). Accordingly, in the attempt to elucidate and fully comprehend the condition and fight of struggle, it is vital to also explore non-conventional literature and art.

Writers such as Victor Hugo, Mark Twain, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. utilized articles, stories, and drama to convey the struggles and hustle of the disadvantaged. However, struggle and hustling are concepts that became prevalent and trendy in many global cities. From the early 1970s with the reggae music of Bob Marley, the 1990s through the influence in part by the globalization of African American hip-hop and in the 2000s by African Afro pop music, music has served as an expressive articulation of everyday struggles and the hustle to survive that are rooted in persistent experiences of inequality and injustice (Gilroy, 1993; Ntarangwi, 2009; Weiss, 2009).

Victor Hugo utilized his book *Les Misérables* to highlight the struggle in the life of the disadvantaged during 19th century France due to inequalities that stemmed from a classist capitalist social structure. In *Les Misérables*, Hugo (1863/ 1992) drew attention to the 19th-century's inequitable socio-economic class system. Hugo bemoaned the fact that 19th-century France's aristocratic social structure created the circumstances of social asphyxiation of those that are disadvantaged in society and thus engendering the struggle that transform individuals that are ordinarily demur and attain integrity into vagabonds and crooks. Thus, Hugo argued that there are social obstacles and convictions that unnaturally engenders struggle and suffering and hence complicates a divine destiny with human fatality. He goes on to argue that there were three struggles of the disadvantaged in 19<sup>th</sup> century France which he highlights in his work: the alienation of man by exploitation of his labor, the deprivation of women in society, and the deterioration and lack of opportunity for children.

In his autobiographical narrative of his early years of varied vagabonding, *Roughing It*, Mark Twain (1872/ 1993) also addressed the struggle of the disadvantaged in society and the early manifestations of hustling. Twain describes how he explored and concocted an array of offhand tactics of earning a living in the late 19th century. Hustling for Twain was a savvy method to earn a little extra money on the side or to moonlight to augment an otherwise inadequate income and the wearisomeness of industrial, repetitive labor during that era (Polsky, 1967; Thieme, 2018; Tevis, 1959).

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1966) likewise described that the economic injustice and struggle of African Americans and other marginalized people is rooted in racialized struggles against systemic, economic, legal, and spatial marginalization. Dr. King goes on to explain that it is easier to dismantle the segregation of lunch counters and the voting polls than it is to tear

down the stronghold of inequality and economic injustice. For instance, Dr. King claims that the minimum wage could easily be raised and thus lift many people out of poverty; however, there is a significant barrier between concept and realization. Dr. King argues that the barrier that prohibits the marginalized are the elites that have always profited from subsistence pay of the marginalized labor. So, Dr. King asserts that it is for this reason, the economy's structural flaws, that African Americans and other disadvantaged people struggle with inequality and depressed living standards. Dr. King argues that many economic sectors rely on the availability of subsistence pay, low-skilled, and stationary minority labor and thus if pay was to dramatically increase, these industries would all be shaken. As a consequence, Dr. King holds that a hardening antagonism to the realization of the economic empowerment of the marginalized should be expected from the financially privileged elite.

The voices of those that struggle with inequality can also be heard through the music they create. From rap to reggae dance hall and Afro beats and pop, hustling has become a leitmotif and thus an account of struggle, but it also expresses a set of alternative tactics for improvisation and mustering of resources (Thieme et al, 2021). These are narratives of synchronized declaration and struggle that are usually not incorporated in conventional historical accounts of urban economic reality (McKensie, 2015; Rollefson, 2017; Thieme et al., 2021).

The prolific rapper Tupac Shakur (1992) in his song “Brenda’s Got a Baby” discusses the predicament of those that struggle with inequality with a special focus on girls and women. The song is a story about a young teen named Brenda. Tupac described in intricate detail the phenomenon of struggle due to a lack of economic resources that leads to hopelessness and predicaments such as teenage pregnancy, drug sale and abuse, lack of knowledge and education, physical and sexual abuse, lack of access to health care and childcare, sex work, and high murder

rates in urban communities in the United States. Tupac (1993) continued to vocalize and describe the struggle in his song “Keep Ya Head Up.” Tupac depicts the lack of hope for many marginalized people because they know that the system is instituted to perpetuate inequality. However, Tupac also highlights that struggle leads to hustle due to the need to survive thus he hustles; “tryna make a dollar outta 15 cents.”

The king of reggae dancehall, Bob Marley also describes the struggle that stems from inequality. In his song “No Woman No Cry”, Marley (1974) sings about the struggle that comes from living in the Government Yards of Trench Town, a public housing project in Kingston Jamaica where he grew up. Marley reveals the struggle endured by the community especially women such as loss of friends and other loved ones, hunger and scarcity of food, lack of transportation and mental health, deficiency of household heating etc. However, with “Redemption Song”, Bob Marley (1979) expresses hope for liberation.

Bob Marley was influenced by the speeches and teachings of Marcus Garvey, a black nationalist and Pan-African philosopher that called for the mental and economic liberation for people of African descent. Thus, in “Redemption Song”, Bob Marley (1979) repeats Marcus Garvey’s (1938) call in his speech that those that struggle with oppression and inequality must “emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind.” With this phrase, Marley highlights the link between mindset, spirituality, and destiny in the quest to liberation. Through “Redemption Song”, Bob Marley assures those that struggle to reject trepidation because existence is not shaped by elites, devastation, or malevolence, because purpose is established by the Almighty. Thus, the leaders that fight for liberation which Marley calls prophets may pass, and the oppressed may continue to be persecuted, and thus feel vulnerable and incapable to end the oppression that comes from

inequality, but God, Marley says is greater. As a consequence, Marley's call to action is to liberate oneself not only economically but also mentally and spiritually.

Afro beats originated in Lagos Nigeria by Fela Kuti. Fela was the son of the prominent activist Olufunmilayo Kuti and he utilized his acclaim to modify the connection between music as an art form to a sociopolitical dialogue around the struggle that the everyday Nigerian endures (Shonekan, 2009). With songs such as "Why Black Man Dey Suffer", Fela Kuti (1971) describes the struggle that persist due to the continued reverberations of colonialism and systemic inequality. In "Shuffering and Shmiling", Fela (1978) continues to vocalize the impact of struggle, he sings about the enslavement of the mind and the need for mental liberation through knowledge and pride. Although Afro beats still continues through Fela sons Seun Kuti and Femi Kuti, much of the pop music that is produced today in Nigeria and throughout the African continent is considered Afro pop.

Eedris Abdulkareem in 2004 released his epic album Jaga which in Yoruba translates to shambles or scatter. In the song Jaga, Eedris intricately describes the struggle of the everyday Nigerian and the impact of the journey towards emergence on the populace. Eedris (2004) describes struggle as increased violence due to peoples' need to survive through hustle so they result to armed robbery, corruption, sexual violence and rape, political strife, the lack of infrastructure such as broken roads, lack of electricity and access to water, and expensive transportation, the continuous widening of the wealth gap between the haves and have nots. However, Eedris highlights hope that Nigeria is still growing and thus all Nigerians must do their part as the nation emerges.

However, Olamide Gbenga Adedeji, the artist properly know Olamide (2019) in his song "Poverty Die" also describes the struggle of the everyday Nigerian and the need to hustle. In

“Poverty Die”, Olamide sings about the need to “step into the street for my paper, I dey hustle make poverty japa o” which translates to he is stepping into the streets to hustle so that poverty will end or die. Again, similar to Bob Marley and Fela Kuti, the theme of mental liberation and spirituality reverberates throughout the song through prayers and the call to action to fight for liberation.

In conclusion, it discovered that there are two definitions to struggle; the circumstance in which the disadvantaged live in and the fight of the marginalized to survive and liberate themselves from their condition (Thieme et al., 2021). Struggle is the circumstances that the marginalized must contend with. These circumstances such as poverty, violence, systemic and institutional marginalization, mental oppression are situations beyond the control of those that are enduring the outcome of inequality. Furthermore, struggle is also the constant battle of survival and liberation that those that are disadvantaged due to inequality which is a derivative or byproduct of society’s current mode of production, free market capitalism.

The literature of Hugo, Twain, and Dr. King and the music of 2Pac, Marley, Fela, Eedris, and Olamide, not only provide descriptions of struggle, but introduces the element of hope. Hope is established on the struggle towards survival and liberation, both financial freedom and path the through the voices of Hugo, Twain, and Dr. King, and the music of Tupac, Marley, Fela, Eedris, and Olamide to attaining these goals of survival and financial, mental, and spiritual liberation is through hustle, knowledge, spirituality, and self-pride.

With this in mind, it is now vital that to explore further literature for the definition of hustlenomics and the dynamics within the hustleconomy and how it has become the space for survival and financial liberation for the disadvantage and those seeking financial liberation.

## **The Journey of the Economy of the Marginalized**

The disadvantaged and marginalized that face challenges and barriers to survive yet alone liberate themselves within the formal economic sector look outside the parameters of the formal economic sector to the informal sector to earn a living. Over the years, academics have categorized the economy which individuals who do not earn a living through the formal economy as the informal economy (Chen, 2012; Losby et al., 2002), underground economy (Frey & Schneider, 2000), the shadow economy (Cassel & Cichy, 1985; Schneider, 2016), the gig economy (Peshkova, 2018) and now the hustleconomy (Thieme, 2018; Thieme et al., 2021). The connection between these economies and the trade operations within them are either they are not reported or are partially represented in formal national accounting systems (Losby et al, 2002).

According to Gërkhani (1999), most scholars with the exception of anthropologists and sociologists previously dismissed all economic activity that took place outside of the formal economy. It was not until the 1950s and 1960s as per Gërkhani, that the informal features of organizational life became increasingly acknowledged as significant and were deemed as a conventional issue for economists to examine. Hence, Gërkhani explains that it was not until the International Labor Organization (ILO) studied this underappreciated phenomenon in 1972, that the economy of the disadvantaged and marginalized was recognized and coined the informal economy.

According to Losby et al. (2002), the term informal economy was originally coined in a study of metropolitan labor markets in Ghana in 1972 and then other African cities by the ILO as well as the World Bank in a series of studies on urbanization and poverty in emerging market nations. Furthermore, Losby et al. go on to explain that the term informal economy became



standard in its use to study concerns pertaining to equality, economic opportunity, and social development as a way of expressing a dualist economic structure seen in emerging market economies. Thus, such dualist economic structure according to Losby et al. combines the formal and informal economies, with economic trades taking place beyond conventional means and delivering evident economic and social advantages. It is for this reason, as per Losby et al. the term informal economy, came to refer to a variety of cash and non-monetary transactions that benefit both the disadvantaged and the privileged in both emerged and emerging market economies.

The hustleconomy is the economic arena where the disadvantaged and marginalized who are unable to make a livelihood in the official sector go to survive and earn a living. The concept of hustle, according to Thieme et al. (2021), describes the social structures that organize the different aspects of the informal economy. As a result, Thieme et al. go on to explain how hustling has become a dialect of action that disadvantaged people have embraced or appropriated in giving meaning to the struggle that they endure and what they do in metropolitan areas. Hustling as per Thieme et al. allots a colloquial name that strikes a chord with prevalent parlance. It is for this reason Thieme et al. claim that the disadvantaged through rap, reggae dancehall and Afro beats and pop vocalize their struggle and need to hustle because hustling has become a central theme and thus a chronicle of struggle that has also come to epitomize a collection of alternate methods for adaptation and monetary attainment.

As a result, as per Thieme (2013), today's urban language of hustling represents a current political language of the marginalized and disenfranchised, supporting various modalities of struggle. These battles Thieme goes on to explain are manifested in continuous attempts to make a livelihood and assertions of identity in communities where the majority of the people are

confined to outlying localities and unofficial economic activities. Thus, Thieme et al. (2021) argue that hustling does not operate as a modern-day economic space for the reprobate that occupy the space outside the norms of propriety of formal capitalistic economies, but rather it is an expression of the positioning and agency that has grown out of and in resistance to persistent marginalizing capitalism, a system that has systematically generated surplus and profit through alienating labor and resource exploitation. As a consequence, Thieme et al. suggest that hustling is therefore considered as a critical notion specifically because of its interpretive implications, purposes, and activities, which are implicit to the intrepid survival of the disadvantage in the face of capitalism, a mode of production that marginalize them.

The gig economy is a subset of the informal sector that has revolutionized, and allotted hustlers increased opportunities to earn a livelihood in hustlenomics through technology. As per Mukhopadhyay and Mukhopadhyay (2020), the gig economy has always been a sector within the larger framework of informal sector; however, with the advent and expansion of online and app-based platforms such as Airbnb, Amazon, Facebook, Fiverr, Instagram, Shopify, Task Rabbit, Uber, and YouTube, the gig economy and the hustleconomy as a whole has experienced immense growth over the last decade. Thus, the gig economy, which is also known as the contingent economy, is rapidly expanding, and is expected to reach \$2.7 trillion by 2025 (Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020).

While the concept of the gig economy has come to be associated with digital platforms like Uber or Airtasker, it is also used interchangeably with terms like sharing economy, on-demand economy, platform economy, crowd-working, and freelancing (Churchill and Craig, 2019; Peshkova, 2018). It is an economy where work is attained and managed via digital platforms and the internet; it establishes a marketplace for people and corporations to provide

and acquire labor and thus, it enables individuals and enterprises to obtain digital and physical contributions from a workforce that is available on demand (Churchill & Craig, 2019; Howcroft & Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2019).

According to Churchill and Craig (2019) work acquired through digital platforms is generally categorized as either physical tasks, which are performed onsite and necessitate the worker to be physically present, or digital tasks, which are completed wholly online from start to finish. Churchill and Craig go on to explain that beyond the initial set-up of the employment, the worker in the latter situation may have no interaction with the person or firm offering the work, whereas in the former case, the worker may have some communication with the hiring people or company. Furthermore, the work is handled through the platform in both circumstances, and most modifications to the nature of the task are made through the platform. Transport, food delivery, and manual labor such as cleaning are examples of physical activities whereas data entry and clerical work are examples of digital work within the gig economy (Wood et al., 2019). Digital jobs are frequently microtasks that are monotonous, tedious, and narrowly circumscribed (Churchill & Craig, 2019; Howcroft & Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2019), allowing businesses to outsource enormous amounts of work such as data entry in a short amount of time. This is a type of online piecework that has been around for a while and entails work being conducted offsite over the internet for a set charge per assignment (Churchill and Craig, 2019; Lehdonvirta 2018). It differs from traditional freelancing, which is frequently compensated by the hour or by the completion of the work. Even jobs that are normally well-paid outside of the gig economy are typically less expensive when offered and secured through digital platforms (Churchill & Craig, 2019; Howcroft & Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2019).

As per Churchill and Craig, the formal economy is increasingly turning to digital platforms to seek, employ, oversee, and pay workers. Furthermore, Churchill and Craig claim that businesses are using these platforms to recruit a diverse range of workers, from highly qualified and technically capable professionals and technicians to low-skilled laborers who can complete microtasks. As a result, Churchill and Craig attest that software development and technological skills were in great demand, creative and multimedia job skills were next, followed by clerical and data entry skills. Thus, Churchill and Craig suggest that outsourcing and offshoring are driving a substantial chunk of the demand for software development and technological skills, as well as repetitive clerical duties such as data entry and thus half of the vacancies posted online were from western nations such as the United States.

At this junction of this research, it is important to note that a segment of the informal economy is the shadow economy which is also known as the underground economy. It is a subdivision of the informal sector that encompasses all illegal and criminal activity inside it (Losby et al., 2002; Thieme, 2013). Nonetheless, despite the fact that the underground or shadow economy is definitely a component of the informal sector, criminal acts are omitted from the scope of this study. As a result, when the terms informal sector or hustlenomics are used in this study, it is referring to businesses and activities that may not follow standard business processes, pay taxes, regulations, or reporting requirements but they are not engaging in obvious criminal acts.

Through reviewing literature on the journey of hustlenomics, it is discovered that hustlenomics and the hustleconomy is the modern-day dialect that describes the informal sector where the disadvantaged and individuals seeking to financially liberate themselves go due to barriers within the formal economic sector to earn their livelihood. Furthermore, due to the

advent of online apps and platforms, technology has created additional opportunities for hustlers to trade, market, and render services through the gig economy, a subset of the informal sector. As a consequence, the gig economy is expanding rapidly and thus so is the hustleconomy.

### **The Academic Dialogue on Hustlenomics: The Four Schools of Thought**

The academic dialogue over the nature and characteristics of the informal sector has evolved over time into four prominent schools of thought which are the Dualist, Legalist, Structuralist, and Voluntarist schools of thought (Chen, 2012). As per Chen, the Dualist school views the informal economy as a collection of peripheral undertakings that are separate from the formal economy. Thus, Chen explains that the informal economy allots the disadvantaged of society access to avenues to earn an income while serving as a safety net during times of hardship.

According to Chen (2012) the Dualists argue that individuals that engage in the informal economy are typically prohibited from formal economic prospects due to inequities in population and current industrial employment growth rates, as well as incompatibility between individual's aptitudes and economic opportunities. Consequently, Chen holds that the Dualists believe that informal units and activities have minimal connections to the formal economy and operate as a detached economic sector with informal workers which are mostly self-employed, constituting disadvantaged individuals of a dualistic or segmented labor market. Hence as per Chen, Dualists do not present much credence to the connections between illegal businesses and government regulations; rather, dualist urge that governments create new opportunities and empower informal operators with finance and business development services, as well as essential infrastructure and social services.

The Legalist school sees the informal sector as made up of determined small-scale entrepreneurs who choose to conduct business unofficially to circumvent the expenses, time, and effort of formal registration and who require property rights to convert their assets into legally documented assets, as per De Soto (1989, 2000). De Soto contends that Legalists claim that the antagonistic legal institutional system forces microenterprises and self-employed people to function under their own unwritten rules. It is for this reason, Legalists place a heavy emphasis on informal businesses and the formal regulatory framework, to the detriment of informal labor and the formal economy as a whole (Chen, 2012; De Soto, 1989). Legalists do, however, admit that formal corporations, or mercantilist interests as per De Soto collaborate with the government and other regulatory agencies to define the administrative regulations that govern the economy. Consequently, Legalist propose that governments and other regulatory agencies should streamline administrative processes to persuade informal enterprises to register and thus present authorized property rights over their assets so as to liberate the industrious capability and commute the assets of informal enterprises into legal owned capital.

Castells and Portes (1989) explain that according to the Structuralist school of thought, the informal economy consists of secondary microenterprises and labor who sustain large capitalist corporations compete by lowering input and labor costs. Thus, as per Castells and Portes, Structuralists' chief argument is that informality is driven by the nature of capitalism and the pursuit for capitalist surplus and growth. As a consequence, Castells and Portes hold that the endeavor of corporations that operate in the formal economic sector is to heighten its competitiveness by maintaining low costs of labor and their responses to unified labor's power, government regulation, particularly around taxes and social regulation; competition within the global market; and the process of economic development, particularly international businesses,

subcontracting chains, and adaptable specialization. It is for this reason, according to Castells and Portes, Structuralists consider the informal and formal economies as inextricably connected. Accordingly, Castells and Portes maintain it is clear that both informal microenterprises and labor are seen as serving the ambitions of capitalist development by supplying low-cost labor, goods, and services. Thus, Castells and Portes explain that Structuralists insists that governments and other regulatory agencies should oversee both business-related transactions and labor interactions to redress the uneven relationship between large corporations and secondary microenterprises and informal labor.

The Voluntarists' stance is analogous to that of the Legalists in the sense that they argue that unregistered enterprises attempt to circumvent rules and taxes, however, disparate from the Legalists, Voluntarists do not argue that the time-consuming registration process is the root cause of unregistered enterprises (Chen, 2012). According to Chen the Voluntarists argue that individuals and microenterprises that prefer to engage in hustlenomics do so subsequent to considering the opportunity costs and benefits of informality versus formality. Consequently, Chen elucidates that the Voluntarists are not concerned with the economic associations between informal businesses and formal corporations; rather, Voluntarists maintain that informal businesses generate unequal competition for formal corporations by evading the regulatory rules, taxes, and other production costs that formal corporations operate under. It is for this reason; Chen attest that Voluntarists advocates those informal enterprises must be regulated under the formal governing administration as a means to augment the tax base and encourage the diminution of discriminatory competition for formal corporations.

Upon examining literature on the four schools of thought on comprehending hustlenomics, the hustleconomy, and all informal economic activity outside of the formal

economic sector, it is clear that Chen is correct in claiming that considering the wide range of the informal economy, each of these schools of thought's perspective attains validity. As per Chen (2012) this is due to the fact that each school represents a different segment of the hustleconomy. However, the hustleconomy or informal economy as a whole is much more diverse and varied than the sum of these viewpoints suggests.

Nevertheless, what is gleaned from literature about the academic dialogue of the four schools of thought around the subject of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy is that some of the hustlers choose to work unofficially and engage in hustlenomics within the hustleconomy in order to circumvent expectation of being official such as having to register their business or pay taxes, while others do so out of urgency or custom. However, informal work appears to be growing during hard economic times or crises, demonstrating that exigency, rather than choice, drives informality. In addition, in society's current capitalistic mode of production's economic quest of surplus and expansion within the global economy, informalization of labor relations is also a characteristic. Furthermore, in many metropolitan neighborhoods and emerging market economies, the overwhelming majority of disadvantaged people do not have access to official jobs, therefore they hustle in order to survive and liberate themselves.

### **The Definition of Hustlenomics and the Hustleconomy**

Hustlenomics and the hustleconomy has no universal definition. However, some reemerging elements that can help characterize hustlenomics and the hustleconomy can be collected from literature. All economic activities within the official parameters established by the government and thus adhere to the regulations of the official governmental authorities are part of the formal economy; thus, those engaged within the formal economic sector participate in activities such as paying taxes and in so doing, enjoy the benefits that come with gaining access



to government-provided support and services (Huynh & Nguyen, 2020; Medina & Schneider, 2018; Schneider, 2016). However, according to Oberholtzer (2016), the formal economic sector's employment and economic prospects are shrinking and rapidly becoming outmoded as society evolves. Hence, more people are being forced out of or consciously moving away from the formal economic sector as a result of fragmentation, technological innovation, poverty, dwindling access to government-provided support and resources, and individuals desiring greater control over their lives and vocations, which leads them to hustlenomics as they seek better prospects in the hustleconomy (Castells, 2015; Sessions et al., 2021; Smith, 2016; Thieme, 2018).

As per Smith (2016b), individuals that earn a living from abstruseness delineate hustlenomics. To put it another way, Oberholtzer (2016) claims that the hustleconomy is made up of people who work tirelessly to make a living. What constitutes a hustle job has no defined parameters; rather Kost et al. (2020) explain that hustlenomics is a boundaryless way of existence that includes doing whatever it takes to make money. As a result, ambition, inventiveness, strong motivation, energy, and intensity drive hustlenomics and the hustleconomy (Oberholtzer, 2016; Smith, 2016). According to Oberholtzer, the hustleconomy is an economy where hustlers prosper by manipulating, juggling, and networking, cogitating and absorbing, and competing as they progress. It's a do-it-yourself economy, with a network of people and groups laboring in pixels and aspiration, all striving to be fulfilled and self-sustaining (Oberholtzer, 2016; Thieme, 2018). As a result, those who choose to engage in hustlenomics must demonstrate creativity and innovation in order to stay competitive (Oberholtzer, 2016; Thieme, 2018).

Hustlenomics offers economic options and space to the disadvantaged and marginalized, people who are typically left out of the formal traditional economy or choose to remain hidden

from it (Schneider, 2016; Thieme, 2018). Thus, Thieme (2018) explains that since many in disadvantaged communities, such as today's urban society, are often excluded from the formal economy, hustlenomics and the hustleconomy is defined by the insecurity, struggle, and the hope experienced by the disenfranchised. In addition, hustlenomics allows hustlers to handle the imbroglios of crises, abstruseness, and anticipation while progressing towards materialization and development (Schneider, 2016; Thieme, 2018). As a result, Thieme maintains that the hustleconomy might be unpredictable, off-grid, and susceptible at times, but it still preserves reason and action, which is crucial in lessening crisis, necessity and survival situations.

Hustlenomics is fueled by a never-ending, persistent, and tenacious search for alternative structures of opportunity outside of the formal economy's constraints (Huynh and Nguyen, 2020; Oberholtzer, 2016; Schneider, 2016). As hustlers are not protected by the same government regulations and institutions as the formal economic sector, hustlenomics and the hustleconomy is insecure and hazardous for this reason, it necessitates risk management by hustlers that operate within it (Medina & Schneider, 2018; Schneider, 2016; Thieme, 2018). As per McDermott (2017), hustlenomics is often not hustlers' primary source of revenue. This is because it can be a source of additional revenue, particularly for hustlers who are pursuing a specific lifestyle or passion (McDermott, 2017; Smith, 2016a & b).

### **Typologies of Hustlenomics and the Connection to the Formal Economy**

In order to comprehend hustlenomics and the hustleconomy, it was critical to review additional literature on the heterogeneous typologies of hustlenomics. Losby et al. (2002) distinguish between two sorts of hustle: hustle as a labor market category and hustle as a work context. One way to understanding the role of hustling in the labor market is the Dual Work Market Theory (Losby et al., 2002; Saint-Paul, 1997). The labor market is divided into four

categories, according to Losby et al.: primary, secondary, informal, and illegal. According to Losby et al., these categories represent society's class, racial, and gender inequality. The formal economic sector, as per Losby et al., consists of a basic wage occupation that are taxed and regulated, like white-collar jobs. The secondary sector encompasses employment that are less protected and less regulated than those in the formal economy, such as lower-wage service sector jobs, which are sometimes referred to as pink collar jobs. According to Losby et al., the Dual Labor Market Theory claims that hustlenomics is made up of disadvantaged individuals who are unable to find formal work or individuals that want liberation to live the life they desire. As a result, Losby et al. claim that hustling encompasses individuals who run their microenterprise in an unregulated or cash-only environment, as well as those who work for employers but off the books. The fourth category as per Losby et al. is illicit work, which encompasses any criminal activity that generates income.

The second typology of hustle, according to Losby et al. (2002) is based on the work context. Losby et al. go on to say that persons who work for others may do so as their main business or as supplemental income to their primary employer. For instance, Losby et al. explain that an accountant, who hires workers off the books during tax season and pays them in cash. In another scenario, Losby et al. provide the example of a person who gets hired by his or her current employer to work on weekends or evenings, or to bring work home to supplement their income. People can use this arrangement to start their own business as a primary source of income or to augment their income from their primary job as per Losby et al.. For example, an individual's principal source of income is her catering business, but she also works part-time to supplement her income from the catering business.

With the exception of basic survival pursuits, few hustlers subsist in complete seclusion from formal businesses. This is because as per Chen (2012), hustlers must obtain raw materials from formal enterprises and/or furnish commodities to formal businesses directly or through middleman typically unofficial businesses. Therefore, individual transactions can be utilized to acquire and distribute goods and services, but they are more likely to be done through a sub-sector network of business partnerships or a value chain of subcontracted connections (Chen, 2012; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987). Thus, as per Portes and Sassen- Koob (1987), the four most common forms of linkages between the formal economy and hustlenomics are (1) the input supply chain, (2) informal subcontracting, (3) subcontracting in manufacturing, and (4) the informal marketing chain.

Portes and Sassen- Koob claim that the first linkage which is the input supply chain provides companies with raw resources. Hence according to Portes and Sassen- Koob's peripheral laborers function as informal suppliers of inputs to local purchasers. The local purchasers then sell the output to the central wholesaler, who is the central link to the formal industry (Portes & Sassen- Koob, 1987; Raijman, 2001).

Informal subcontracting is the second linkage of hustlenomics to the formal economic sector as per to Portes and Sassen- Koob's. According to Portes and Sassen- Koob's, informal subcontracting is widely utilized in the building and repair industries. This linkage between the formal economy and hustlenomics enables formal construction and repair service enterprises to sustain a small work force. Hence, principal contractors are allocated work, and they organize informal networks of subcontractors and workers from the hustleconomy to provide the stipulated service (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987; Raijman, 2001).

The third linkage between the formal economy and hustlenomics is subcontracting in manufacturing. Intrinsically, according to Raijman (2001), these are sweatshops that depend on people who are classified as industrial outworkers. These industry outworkers are often under the impression that they are self-employed; however, they are truly working for large formal businesses (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987; Raijman, 2001).

The last linkage between the formal economy and hustlenomics as per Portes and Sassen-Koob's is the informal marketing chain. Portes and Sassen-Koob's explains that businesses within the formal economy engage in hustlenomics through this linkage to reduce expenses associated with retaining a permanent sales or marketing force. Hence, what seems to be a chaotic swarm of marketers, street vendors, and traders is essentially well-coordinated by a collection of formal firm dependent middlemen (Portes, 1994a, 1994b; Portes and Sassen-Koob's, 1987; Raijman, 2001). In today's society, Gross and Wangenheim (2018) explain that influencers are hustlers that are a new marketing phenomenon who has emerged as a result of the expansion of digital social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram.

According to Freberg et al. (2011), influencer marketing allows influencers to make money by promoting their personal brands and/or act as third-party promoters who uses their social media platform to influence consumers' opinions and purchasing decisions. Thus, as per Glucksman (2017), influencer marketing is an approach to marketing that centers on influential personalities to reach a niche audience. These influential personalities as per Glucksman are known as influencers. So therefore, according Glucksman, with the advent of online social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, businesses may now choose from a gamut of sources to advertise their products or business. This opportunity, according to Glucksman, is a significant contributing factor to the emergence of social media influencer marketing.

Gross and Wangenheim (2018) explain that organizations utilize influencer marketing by incorporating influencers into their marketing strategy as a communication conduit. Thus, Gross and Wangenheim hold that businesses reach and engage with a larger and focused niche audience through these influencers. It is for this reason Gross and Wangenheim claim that over the last few years, marketing through influencers on digital platforms has become a critical topic. For instance, according to Gross and Wangenheim, 63% of businesses in the United States boosted their influencer marketing expenditure in 2017 and this trend continues to rise till today. Nonetheless, despite the rising public interest in influencer marketing, Gross and Wangenheim attest that both study and practice of influencer marketing are still in their early stages.

In current times as per Glucksman (2017), consumers trust and thus depend on influencers to help them in making lifestyle and purchasing decisions. It is for this reason, Glucksman asserts that the development of social media has allotted a novel channel for companies to engage and communicate with patrons in a natural and unadulterated manner. As per Glucksman, influencers are capable of engendering and supplying content on their platforms which endorses their personal and specific companies' brands with the objective of expanding their following while attaining brand recognition for themselves and the brand they are endorsing. As a result, according to Freberg et al. (2011), social media influencers' relevance and performance is crucial, and thus technology has been established to detect and measure influencers' significance to their personal brand and a company or brand. Consequently, as per Freberg et al., the technology tracks the number of followers, hits, shares, likes, and comments an influencer can garner and therefore all of these elements are crucial aspects of a social media influencer's success.

According to Glucksman (2017), influencer marketing affords an avenue for businesses to engage consumers in their daily lives naturally and directly; hence, influencers attain the capacity to endorse companies and their personal brand through their own lives, making them accessible to the typical consumer. Therefore, as per Ledbetter (2016) when an influencer attempts to inspire and persuade their audience to try specific products or engage in certain activities, a dynamic emerges that can alter the path and content of their relationship. Thus, according to Ledbetter, while conventional marketing will primarily target mainstream audiences, influencer marketing has the great potentiality to reach niche populations that were previously inaccessible. Hence Buyer (2016) holds that influencers serve as a vital link between a business and its brand, and the client due to their candor and sincerity with the audience. As a result, Buyer claims that influencers have an immense amount of social influence and credibility and this is the reason why the influencer phenomenon is so effective.

Gross and Wangenheim (2018) claim that there are four categories of influencers: the Snoopers, Informers, Entertainers, and Infotainers. Snoopers, according to Gross and Wangenheim, are influencers who find new social media networks. Hence, as per Gross and Wangenheim, Snoopers are influencers whose interest or pastime lies in creating and sharing material on social media platforms with an audience who share similar interests as themselves. Thus, Gross and Wangenheim hold that Snoopers are driven to generate material that they can share with others who have similar interests and for this reason, their platform serves as a conduit for them to express themselves, and build and maintain a social network of connections, friends, and followers. Snoopers, according to Gross and Wangenheim, are also considered the discovers because they are keen to try new products for example new equipment such as cameras and lighting, as well as see how various content is received by their audience. Thus, as per Gross

and Wangenheim, Snoopers also view the content on their platform as an opportunity to share knowledge, reactions, or amusement.

The second type of influencer according to Gross and Wangenheim (2018) are Informers which are commonly known as thought leaders. Gross and Wangenheim explain that Informers attempt to disseminate their knowledge and wisdom about a particular subject matter on social media, therefore addressing crucial subject matter deficiencies. It is for this reason Gross and Wangenheim claim that Informers, unlike Snoopers, are motivated by the desire to share useful, instructive, and advantageous knowledge and wisdom. As per Gross and Wangenheim, Informers are able to accomplish this aspiration by virtue of their high level of skill, expertise, and subject matter wisdom and knowledge. Accordingly, Gross and Wangenheim hold that when dealing with subject matter specific difficulties or voids, audience seeks guidance and assistance of thought leaders and with their content, Informers meet the demands, interests, and aspirations of their audience.

Gross and Wangenheim (2018) go on to explain that Informers aspire to be regarded as a trustworthy and reliable repository of knowledge and wisdom on a specific subject matter. Thusly as per Gross and Wangenheim, though leaders are conscious of their responsibilities and as a consequence value the feedback of their followers on the quality of the knowledge and wisdom shared on their platform. For this reason, Gross and Wangenheim claim that material thought leaders share on their platform is thoroughly researched and developed prior to sharing with their followers on their platform. Informers, Gross and Wangenheim hold expect a lot of themselves and thus, strive to continually enhance their material and platform.

The third type of influencer as per Gross and Wangenheim (2018) is the Entertainer. According to Gross and Wangenheim, by engendering appealing and engaging material,



Entertainers bring pleasure, delight, and repose to their followers. Music, comedy, drama, and more are all examples of entertaining material that Entertainers share on their platforms as per Gross and Wangenheim. Gross and Wangenheim explain that Influencer ingenuity, originality, imagination, and narrative storytelling all affect the content shared by Entertainers. In contrast to Informers, Gross and Wangenheim hold that Entertainers aspire to have fun with their followers and frequently add a personal touch, association, or perception to their material.

According to Gross and Wangenheim (2018) Entertainers are hustlers whose platform involves the effort of a team in backing them in content development activities such as editing and filming and platform management activities such as social media management. Despite the fact that Entertainers attain the assistance of their team, Gross and Wangenheim hold that Entertainers are seen as a single entity by their followers and thus their followers are more interested in the person they see in front of the camera and not necessarily the team that manages the platform. As a result, Gross and Wangenheim claim that the interaction between the Entertainer and their followers is less common and intimate than the other types of influencers. To mitigate this, Gross and Wangenheim hold that Entertainers host live-stream videos, question and answer videos, meet and greets, and request for reactions from their followers on the material they have shared as avenues to make a connection on a larger scale.

Gross and Wangenheim (2018) consider the amalgamation of Informers and Entertainers as Infotainers which is the fourth type of influencer. According to Gross and Wangenheim, Infotainers are authorities in their field who are typically illustrious. Thusly, Gross and Wangenheim claim that subject matter topics, on the other hand, are secondary in the sense that content material contains a greater amount of entertaining characteristics grounded on emotive and personal features. Nonetheless, as per Gross and Wangenheim, entertainment is inextricably

linked to their primary subject matter. Accordingly, Gross and Wangenheim (2018), claims that each Infotainer determines the amount of subject matter themes to entertainment-related themes based on the vision they have for their platform; they can generate content material that is entirely informative, entertaining, or an amalgamation of the two. Gross and Wangenheim go on to explain that subject and recreation related material appeal to a wide range of people; some followers deem the Infotainer influencer as an authority in their field, while others see them on a personal level as someone they can relate to. As a result, Gross and Wangenheim claim that similar to Entertainers, individual follower engagement is less regular and thus, an Infotainer engagement with their followers occurs more frequently on an aggregate plane such as livestreams, question and answer sessions, meet and greets and so on.

With this in mind, although Gross and Wangenheim (2018) claim Influencers include Snoopers, Informers, Entertainers, and Infotainers, Gross and Wangenheim however also hold that classification is indeed not definitive. This is due to as per Gross and Wangenheim, the high level of undercurrents on social media. Hence, Gross and Wangenheim maintain that the influencer domain is rapidly expanding, new influencers are constantly emerging and for this reason, the proposed typology may be amplified by numerous subtypes.

### **The Characteristics of Hustlenomics and the Hustleconomy**

Key themes that begin to explain hustlenomics and the hustleconomy can be gathered from literature. These concepts reveal the characteristics of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy, such as emergence, opportunity cost and legality, cash payments, gig and multi-income hustle, social networks, autonomy and flexibility, survival, and labor issues.

*Emergence.* The idea of emergence can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Smith, (2016) describes that as the growing or sprouting phase of a business, endeavor, or individual aspiration

is one example of emergence. Smith goes on to explain that this form of emergence occurs during a business's, venture's, or individual's emerging stage, when they choose to avoid the restrictions, regulations, and costs of participating in the formal economy, such as taxes, in order to develop, subsist, and be sustainable. Thus, once emerged, according to Smith, they progress to the more formal economic sector, where they can contribute to the formal economy by functioning within the government's established limitations and hence complying to the official governmental authorities' regulations.

According to Khanna and Palepu (2010), the other form of emergence is that which occurs in developing markets and economies. This occurs when developing countries and industries have not yet reached their full economic potential; hence, they attain the capacity to grow in order to emerge and reach their fullest economic potential (Khanna and Palepu, 2010; Mody, 2003; Schneider, 2016). Hustlenomics flourishes in emerging markets as per Khanna and Palepu because there is a gap created by dysfunctional, underdeveloped, or non-existent foundational institutions that the formal market requires to function at its full potential.

Khanna and Palepu (2010) explain that the growth of hustlenomics in developing market economies is frequently a result of dysfunctional or underdeveloped institutions. This is largely due to the fact that as per Khanna and Palepu, institutional development is a difficult, intricate, and extensive process impacted by an industry's or country's history, politics, social systems, and culture. Thus, Khanna and Palepu go on to explain that states and their economy are complex, just like people. This Khanna and Palepu hold is primarily due to the fact that they necessitate unique infrastructure, agencies, and systems to function, such as banking, taxation, transportation, energy, communication, law enforcement, and defense; systems that must function properly for the entire economy to operate appropriately, and the failure of one

institution or system can cause cascades of breakdown in other parts of the economy. As a result, emerging market economies have transactional zones where buyers and sellers are unable to trade proficiently (Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Sachs, 2005).

According to Khanna and Palepu (2010), every market economy should, in theory, provide a set of institutions that aid in the smooth operation of markets; yet emerging market economies fall short in a number of ways. As a result of the faulty or undeveloped institutions in emerging market economies, Khanna and Palepu hold that hustlers step in to fill the gap or exploit the brokenness through entrepreneurial efforts, fraud, or corruption. Furthermore, Khanna and Palepu state that as the economy evolves, individuals who are discounted from the formal economy because the formal economy has not emerged hence does not offer opportunities for employment must find other ways to earn an income, one of which is hustling.

Sachs (2005) claims that many developing market economies create infrastructure, distribute resources, and adopt policies, interventions to drive emergence, development, and growth in order to achieve development or economic emergence. According to Sachs, the difficulties of emergence go beyond those of governance. That is because as per Sachs, despite the fact that many governments in these regions have displayed courage, integrity, and intellect, growth has stalled. Thus, Sachs claims that the clinical economics approach shows the route to a more effective strategy; a good differential diagnosis, followed by a suitable treatment regimen, is the key to clinical economics.

As per Khanna and Palepu (2010), markets do not develop instantaneously. Thus, Khanna and Palepu hold that markets for goods, labor, and capital that lack fundamental middlemen are inclined to persist as inefficient over lengthy periods of time. Appropriately, as per Khanna and Palepu, even when developing countries' governments build new intermediaries

to cover these vacancies, they do not work immediately. In other words, countries take time to develop; the question is, what will the masses do while the economy develops? Well, as per Khanna and Palepu and Thieme et al. (2021), the masses must subsist; the hustling economy offers an alternative source of money, hence moderating poverty.

Emerging market economies like the United States are likewise affected by the issue of emergence because although their economies may be fully developed, within their economy may be an industry that might be emerging, and thus emerging market economies may have some emergingness built into their economies according to Khanna and Palepu (2010). Khanna and Palepu highlight that the subprime mortgage industry is an example of such emergingness of a developing market economy. Khanna and Palepu maintain that the subprime mortgage industry was a chief contributor in the 2008 financial crisis in the United States. Khanna and Palepu go on to explain that the rapid development and mounting intricacy of transactions within the mortgage market; the bundling and trading of mortgages in convoluted derivatives inundated the capacity of the market intermediaries. Subsequently, Khanna and Palepu claim that despite the fact that the United States is a mature economy, the aperture in the market infrastructure exposed the mortgage industry's institutional fragility (Khanna & Palepu, 2010). Khanna and Palepu explain that such chasms provide opportunities for hustlers to generate money, either by filling the aperture through entrepreneurial efforts or by committing fraud and corruption.

Furthermore, the quality of public institutions allows for the hustling economy to thrive. The presence of corrupt government officials in a bureaucracy is associated with more unofficial activities (Schneider, 2016; Khanna & Palepu, 2010); conversely, higher-quality institutions, on the other hand, improve the benefits of having a formal status by ensuring secure property rights and contract enforcement (Schneider, 2016). With this in mind, Schneider (2016) argues that if

institutions can be strengthened and fiscal policy is more closely aligned with market preferences, the likelihood of hustlenomics developing due to the failure of institutions and systems in promoting an efficient market economy, and hustler going underground due to inefficient institutions and systems, can be reduced.

*Opportunity cost and Legality.* According to Raijman (2001), within the categories of informal work, activities may be legal or illegal. Hence, Raijman explains economic activities can be distinguished by the manner in which the goods and services are produced or exchange for instance, legal commodities such as food, house cleaning services, and hand handyman work that are legal commodities may originate both through legally regulated and unregulated production arrangements. Thus, although these activities may not intrinsically be unlawful, they may violate some non-criminal law such as not adhering to labor laws, evading taxes, or getting the appropriate permits or licensing (Castells & Portes, 1989; Losby et al., 2002).

Thus, hustlers will engage in and push the lines of legality when the opportunity cost of illegitimacy is lower than the cost of being legit when there are no other options (Schneider, 2016; Thieme, 2018). Thieme, (2018) argues that hustling is on the edge of legality, so there is some level of hazard and gamble associated with it. Nonetheless, Thieme maintains that when there is a low possibility of law enforcement, hustlers will find it safe enough to hustle and thus will seize the opportunity. Furthermore, Schneider (2016) argues that labor market rules or trade impediments, for example, are another crucial element that restricts individuals' liberty of choice in the official sector, resulting in a significant upsurge in labor expenses and thus offering another inducement to engage in hustlenomics. It is for this reason as per Schneider, that hustlenomics accounts for a larger share of total GDP in strongly regulated countries. Thus, Schneider maintains that copious formalities and bureaucracy, taxes, and other forms of

government regulation are exorbitant to individuals and businesses, therefore the opportunity cost promotes functioning within the hustleconomy.

Moreover, historical and rising economic injustices in urban areas, the necessity to monetarily sustain oneself and one's family, and the exigency to achieve and keep some feeling of power, respect, and character within one's community are key challenges that many urban residents encounter (Thieme, 2018; Whitehead et al., 1994). These obligations and necessities combined with a deficiency of opportunities within the formal economic sector, results in individuals engaging in hustlenomics and joining the hustleconomy. Sometimes they engage in illegitimate hustle; nonmainstream activities, such as internet fraud and drug trafficking, are seen as giving a possibility for economic progress and developing a power base for those who have been denied acclaim in the formal economic sector as a result of such circumstances (Whitehead et al., 1994).

*Cash only payment.* Only cash is accepted as payment. Within the hustleconomy, cash is most typically traded as a means of payment rather than credit or check. According to Losby et al. (2002), the goal of using cash rather than a more formal form of payment such as a check, or credit is to forfend a documentation of the business transaction. As a result, Losby et al. hold that the essence of this arrangement is represented in the colloquial expressions "off the books" and "under the table," which conjure up images of a person receiving cash in an untraceable manner. Losby et al. go on to say that some of the transactions in hustlenomics may be predicated on a service exchange known as bartering or swapping.

*Gig and multi-income hustle.* As per Bansal et al. (2020), the gig economy is a type of temporary legally binding employment, such as a temporary agreement or independent work that a hustler engages in and is paid once the assignment is completed. Peshkova (2018) explains that

independent workers who are paid by the gig, project or a task, their patron, the consumers who need the service, and the companies that connect the worker to their patron, make up the gig economy. According to Mukhopadhyay and Mukhopadhyay (2020), gig-workers are people who work for one or more businesses on a short-term or contract basis, undertaking a range of jobs, such as freelancing, consulting, and temporary work. Kaitharath (2019) goes on to explain that management consultants, film makers, and software developers, who are well paid and gardeners, delivery boys, and drivers, who may earn less, are examples of occupations that comprise the gig economy.

Many localities have long had a gig economy; from the local handymen to independent computer programmers, people have long worked hard to make ends meet as a substitute for or augment to a conventional salaried employment (McDermott, 2017; Smith, 2016a & b; Thieme, 2018). The hustleconomy, on the other hand, as per Smith (2016a & b) has progressed beyond the neighborhood handyman to an innovative economy that uses technology to connect consumers with hustlers. Customers can now connect with hustlers through a variety of apps and internet platforms. These hustlers perform a variety of services, including ride share, homestays, driving for ride-hailing services, house cleaning, and so on.

With the introduction of technology and online platforms, Smith (2016a & b) maintains that hustlers are enabled to make money in a variety of ways for example hustlers utilize these platforms to share their belongings with others for a fee and sell their used goods or creations. Hustlers in today's hustleconomy are not like those in the past; according to Kaitharath (2019). Kaitharath, explains that they are workers who work in a wide range of jobs, from high-paying to low-paying. Thus, Kaitharath, holds that software developers, management consultants, and video makers may command high salaries, while delivery boys and drivers may be paid by the



package or by the hour.

*Social networks.* In hustlenomics, social networks play an important role. Oberholtzer (2016) explains that usually, hustlers commonly refer a friend or has seen another hustler's work. As a result, as per Oberholtzer the process of obtaining labor is not solely meritocratic, at the same time, it is also seldomly nepotistic. As Oberholtzer explains, this is due to the fact that no one wants to jeopardize their reputation by recommending an incompetent friend or relative. Thus, in hustlenomics, as per Oberholtzer, building network connections functions in the same way as constructing an audience; over time, a hustler persuades people that their work is consistently superior, enough that their next work will be worth buttressing, and thus, even more than an audience, the right connections will feed into a hustler's hustle.

Furthermore, according Losby et al. (2002), informal transactions are also common in rural households, but they may not always contribute significantly to future prosperity rather, these trading networks are a means of generating economic support in the instance members of a close-knit community with a strong social network fall on difficult times. Losby et al. explain that hustlenomics permits community members to pool resources in a manner that safeguard members of the community from plunging below a commonly recognized economic safety net. Consequently, according to Losby et al., hustle economic activities can employ different methods of trade, each with varied incentives and expectancies of payment, depending upon the nature of social context. These modalities Losby et al. explains represent the type of non-economic relationships between individuals as established by the customs and structures of the community. As a result, hustlenomics emerges partially to meet the needs of family or community rather than for economic profit.

*Autonomy and flexibility.* Many hustlers, particularly in mature market economies like the

United States, prefer the hustleconomy over the formal economy because it provides them with more autonomy, flexibility, and independence. Participants, in other words, have the freedom to run their own enterprise; they have flexibility in deciding operating hours or days; they can use and develop their creativity; and they can live the life they want (Gërkhani, 1999; Oberholtzer, 2016; Schneider, 2016; Smith, 2016)

*Survival.* Hustlenomics is based on the survival needs of society's most vulnerable and disenfranchised individuals. As a result, hustlenomics is based on the incidence of informal hustle economic activities and the survival needs of hustlers (Thieme, 2013; Thieme et al., 2021).

*Labor Concerns.* Mukhopadhyay and Mukhopadhyay (2020) elucidate that the hustleconomy is an uncontrolled economy fueled by a work-or-starve mentality. As a result, Mukhopadhyay and Mukhopadhyay maintain that many people working within its bounds lacks the protections afforded to those in the official economy, such as employee benefits and labor regulations. As a result, while engaging in hustlenomics within the hustleconomy allows hustlers to earn a limitless amount of money, the contrary might also be true because the hustleconomy has no set minimum wage (Kaitharath, 2019; Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020). The abundance or scarcity nature of the hustleconomy can be distressing; unpredictable pay can make it difficult for hustlers to plan and save for the future, which is further aggravated by a lack of access to retirement benefits, as well as the absence of sick leave if a hustler is incapable to work, leaving many hustlers vulnerable and stressed (Bansal et al., 2020; Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020).

Moreover, because the hustleconomy remains generally unregulated, hustlers engaged in hustlenomics endure inadequate advantages and professional security as per Bansal et al. (2020). Furthermore, Bansal et al. (2020) claim that regardless of the fact that the United States

Department of Labor (DOL) established that numerous individual operating in the hustleconomy such as gig workers, are deemed to be contractors when it comes to federal wage and hour regulations based on their contracts, hustlers, are still vulnerable because they lack access to labor protection, healthcare, and other benefits enjoyed by those engaged in the formal economy. For example, Mukhopadhyay and Mukhopadhyay (2020) argue that shared ride drivers such as Lyft and Uber drivers are subject to homicide rates that are almost 20 times higher than other professions because, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), they are vulnerable while working alone in remote places, in high-crime zones, with people who are inebriated

### **Character of Hustler**

According to the literature, the hustlenomics is entrepreneurial by nature, and hustlers who choose to participate in it not only become entrepreneurs, but also gain a diverse set of skills that enable them to compete in this rapidly changing environment (Oberholtzer, 2016; Smith, 2016a & b). Self-organization and self-motivation are two basic criteria for someone who is entrepreneurial enough to take on a varied variety of gig work, build a strong reputation, assure continuity of orders, and so maintain flow of work, according to Mukhopadhyay and Mukhopadhyay (2020). Bansal et al. (2020) claim that the hustleconomy is fast paced, driven by innovation, and it thrives in an unregulated environment. Due to the hustleconomy's strong resemblance to a free market, hustlers must maintain a steady level of competitiveness; accordingly, Bansal et al. hold that hustlers must constantly update their knowledge base and skill set in order to thrive in hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. Concisely, Mukhopadhyay and Mukhopadhyay explain that hustlers must be aggressive, competitive, well-informed, competent,

ambitious, resolute, energetic, and innovative due to the hustleconomy's dynamic, competitive, and fast-paced nature.

### **Chapter Two Summary**

The main purpose of this chapter was to evaluate current literature that looks at the struggle phenomenon that gave birth to and advanced hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. Furthermore, the objective of this chapter was to learn about the characteristics of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy and the forces at work inside it. Additionally, this chapter explored the barriers that hinder the success of the hustlers as well as the best practices and methods used by hustlers who engage in hustlenomics to achieve success. This literature review explored various subjects that are both directly related to and intertwined in the realm of the hustleconomy and the hustlers who engage in hustlenomics in order to achieve these goals.

This literature review began with the concept that humans are social creatures, and that as a result of human's social nature, society has thrived by utilizing a complex division of labor and participatory production systems to generate the necessities society requires to survive. Humans lived as hunter-gatherers for much of its existence, it was not until the state and civilization emerged some 5,500 years ago that private ownership of natural resources, capital, and labor became possible. Hence, for the first time in human history, inequality was established as an outcome of the allocation of capital, which left some individuals with capital and others without. As a consequence, numerous exploitative systems, such as, capitalism, are fostered by social structures that allow elites to take advantage of the surpluses engendered by the producers, resulting in inequality and the alienation of the producers.

Additional literature was reviewed to attain and comprehend the meaning and characteristics of capitalism, as well as its role in producing or not generating inequalities that

drive numerous people to hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. Capitalism was interpreted to be a system in which people or enterprises own capital, investments are made privately, and pricing, productivity, and distribution of goods and services are primarily controlled by competition in a free market. The works of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and Milton Friedman were studied in order to attain a better grasp of this system. The work of scholars such as Acemoglu and Robinson, Alvey J., Alvey J.E., Ashford, Awan, Calhoun, Carroll and Shabana, Elrick and Thies, Brown et al., Graafland and Wells, Granberg, Herzog, Landsburg, Parker, Peet, Pryor, Shleifer, Weingast, Wellington and Zandvakili, and Wood, that have studied Smith's, Marx's, and Milton's works was also reviewed. It was discovered that they all agree that inequality exists. In addition, it was inferred that they are all in agreement that inequality is either a result of or caused by capitalism. However, what they argue about is who is responsible for addressing the gaps caused by derivatives or byproducts of capitalism, namely, inequality.

As a result, it was necessary for the sake of this study that additional literature was explored in order to gain knowledge of what inequality entails. The “Equality of What” debate was utilized as an effective method of evaluating equality and inequality. Sen sparked the controversy with his Tanner speech, then Dworkin, Arneson, and Cohen followed in by stating their positions. The core concept that emerged from the “Equity of What” discourse around equality and inequality, is that the consequences such as affluence, earnings, wellness, schooling, and other advantages that society collectively are influenced by are two categories: those for which the individual can be found accountable and those for which the individual cannot. As a result, inequalities that can be traced back to an individual should be characterized as efforts and are widely accepted. Those caused by situations for which an individual is not accountable, and which are past the person's control are designated as circumstances and should, in essence, be

handled and eliminated because they are discriminatory and hence unjust (Brunori et al., 2013).

As a result, it was discovered that inequality is defined as a set of conditions outside the individual's control that prevents them from living the life they wish.

At this point of the research, there is no doubt that inequality exists and that it is a result or byproduct of capitalism. Rather, the debate is on whether the benefits of capitalism outweigh its negative consequences, such as inequality. Scholars such as Marx and Wisman argue that capitalism is irredeemable and is based on the alienation and suffering of producers, whereas Friedman and Muller argue that, while inequality and poverty are unavoidable consequences of capitalism's processes, the benefits obtained from capitalism far outweigh these unfortunate circumstances.

Inequality arises as a result of unequal capital ownership and the systemic structures used by the elites to maintain status quo (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016; Wisman, 2015), and thus could be a barrier that hustlers face as they strive for success and liberation (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016; Wisman, 2015). Thus, it is important to seek the insight of hustlers to inquire if capital ownership and systemic structures are indeed barriers to their success. If it is, then it is also vital to inquire how successful hustlers circumvent these barriers to attain success. Furthermore, it was discovered that the privileged maintains their position in three important ways; inheritance (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016); capital accumulation (Biondi & Olla, 2020); and social mobility (Corak, 2013; Jerrim & Macmillan, 2015). As a result, it is also important to inquire if inheritance, financial accumulation, or social mobility can be termed success factors and thus is an excellent concept to pose to and attain clarity from hustlers, those who are affected by inequity struggle (Thieme, 2013, 2017).

Two meanings of struggle were identified as the situation in which the marginalized live and the battle of the marginalized to survive and overcome their situation (Thieme et al., 2021). Struggle is the situation in which the disadvantaged are forced to live in. Poverty, violence, systematic and institutional marginalization, and mental oppression are examples of circumstances of inequality that are beyond the control of those who are enduring the long-term consequences of capitalism. Struggle is also the unceasing battle of survival and socioeconomic liberation that those that are disadvantaged engage in due to inequality.

Not only are tales of hardship gleaned through the research, but also the concept of hope in the literature of Hugo, Dr. King and Twain, and in the music of Eedris, Fela, Marley, Olamide and Tupac. The hope concept comes not just from the quest for survival, but also from the pursuit for financial liberty. They agreed that hustling, knowledge, spirituality, and self-pride are the keys to survival and economic, mental, and spiritual liberty. Could these be the strategies and best practices used by hustlers to achieve success and socioeconomic freedom? This is a question that requires the insight and input of hustlers.

The hustleconomy was discovered to be the informal sector where the disadvantaged and people seeking financial freedom to live their lives as they wish hustle for their livelihood. Due to the arrival of technology - online platforms and apps, this economic arena has seen a recent rise of the gig sector, which has created additional options for hustlers to earn money. Emergence, opportunity cost and legality, cash payments, gig and multi-income hustling, social networks, autonomy and flexibility, survival, and labor difficulties characterize hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. It was also observed that hustlers that participate in hustlenomics are agile and entrepreneurial, and that they acquire a varied set of talents that empower them in this fast-paced environment (Oberholtzer, 2016; Smith, 2016a & b). Due to the hustleconomy's dynamic,

competitive, and fast-paced nature, hustlers are also known for being self-organized and self-motivated, assertive, competitive, well-informed, competent, ambitious, resolute, energetic, and innovative (Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020). So, how has this thriving economy aided the financial liberation and success of some hustlers? This is a question worth presenting to hustlers who have attained success in hustlenomics. As a result, although the review of literature has unveiled copious amounts of knowledge about the hustleconomy and the hustlers that engage in hustlenomics, it is evident that in order to answer this study's research questions, additional research must be conducted by listening to the voices of hustlers. Thus, in order to attain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy, and to discover the strategies and best practices successful financially liberated hustlers employ to attain success, this research will proceed by conducting a qualitative phenomenological study that focuses on the influencer hustler population.



## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

### Introduction

The main goal of this study is to find out the barriers faced and strategies and best practices successful influencer hustlers use to achieve success in the hustleconomy. A qualitative research design is the best approach for accomplishing this study's goals. Hence, this chapter contains the full dialogue of the research design and methodology employed in this study. This chapter offers a thorough evaluation of the philosophical postulations that guide the research methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, an assessment of concepts that influence the application of the chosen methodology is also incorporated in this chapter.

Accordingly, this chapter commences with the Re-Statement of Research Questions in order to reduce the research questions that this study intends to answer. The rationale for using a qualitative approach in this study is elucidated in the Nature of the Study section. The Methodology section goes over the phenomenological approach that was utilized in this study. Thus, this section of the chapter also discusses the theory, framework, and justifications of the phenomenological methodology. The Research Design section postulates an explanation of how this study was conducted, including the analysis unit, population, and sample size parameters.

The protection of the participants of this study is vital; thus, the Protection of Human Subjects section reviews the criteria and processes of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and thus includes the methods utilized to identify and engage participants for the study. The Data Collection, Interview Techniques, and Interview Protocol sections highlight the IRB processes, and delineate how the interviews was executed. Creswell and Poth (2018) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) proposed interview strategies that provided guidance to the interview processes of this study. Accordingly, the connections between interview questions and the study are

explored with a focus on the literature review findings and its impact on the research questions and objective.

The Validity section of this chapter goes over the validity instrument utilized. This section also contains an explanation of the methodology applied to corroborating the research questions. Thusly, the overall reliability of the study along with prima facie validity, and expert review validity are all factors that were considered in this section. The researcher's personal bias is stated, as well as its potential influence on the study. For this reason, this section also covers how the investigator uses bracketing and epoché to assuage bias. The Data Analysis section explains the coding process and the contents of this chapter is recapitulated in the summary section of this chapter.

### **Re-Statement of Research Questions**

The research questions of this study are wide, open, and generic in nature, allowing participants to perceive them in their own way. According to Creswell (2007), meaning is constructed in the same way that it is generated in dialogues when open-ended questions are addressed. Furthermore, according to Creswell, it is preferable to have the questions be as open as possible since it allows the investigator to attain an understanding of the hustleconomy and what influencer hustlers do to succeed and attain financial liberation within it by listening and paying attention to what they say and do in their daily lives. As a result, the objective of this study is to investigate and respond to the following research questions:

- RQ 1: What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 2: What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers that are engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 3: How do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success?

- RQ 4: Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful influencer hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers?

### **Nature of the Study**

This study employs a phenomenological qualitative methodology to effectively answer the research questions and meet the objectives of this study. This is due to the fact that as per Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the investigation of a concept or issue in its natural environment in which the subject is typically encountered characterizes qualitative research. Thusly, consistent with Creswell (2013), qualitative research employs a variety of investigative methodologies and thus focuses on the research design. Appropriately, Creswell explains that qualitative research is a study that commences with preconceptions and the application of explanatory and theory based frameworks to guide the exploration of the research questions in the endeavor to embark on the interpretation that groups or individuals attach to a social or human situation or phenomenon. Thusly, as per Gray (2013), qualitative research does not rely on statistical elucidations; instead, it is conceived by employing interview and observation techniques. As a result, when a phenomenon or issue needs to be comprehended, researchers often employ a qualitative methodology, especially when the issue impacts people who are marginalized or disadvantaged (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2002)

The research methodology is a vital part of this study. Through the study of individuals, groups, or communities qualitative research methodologies are utilized to attain insights and knowledge that illuminates on social issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2002). This study's methodology comprises of several steps to obtain its goals which includes interview questions, data gathering, analysis, elucidation, and validation. Accordingly, as per Creswell and Creswell (2018) one of the most important factors to consider in this qualitative

phenomenological study, is the investigator's philosophical lens which comprises of the fundamental set of beliefs that underpins the investigator's philosophical orientation or lens. Thusly, Creswell and Creswell hold that a number of elements influences the researcher's choice of paradigm such as the subject orientation of the investigator, research communities, advisors, and mentors, as well as previous research experiences. Creswell and Creswell go on to explain that the researcher's philosophical perspective guides the investigator's design and research methodologies, therefore it is critical for the investigator to make their overarching philosophical beliefs evident.

Contingent upon the research design, methodology, and processes, as well as the researchers' lens, there are philosophical world viewpoints and postulations that can influence the research process. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Petersen and Gencel (2013), pragmatism, postpositivist, constructivism, and transformative are the four central philosophical worldviews. Pragmatism is often the viewpoint of mixed-methods researchers, quantitative researchers are usually postpositivist while constructivists and transformative perspectives are typically that of qualitative researchers.

Pragmatism is the perspective that is frequently employed by mixed-methods investigators due to the fact that it is not bound by a specific philosophical theory or research strategy. Therefore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) maintain that pragmatists are inclined to employ the optimal method which is frequently an amalgamation of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to answer the research questions or address the study's topics.

The concept of postpositivist is based on the examination of variables to discover cause and effect consequences. For this reason, Creswell and Creswell (2018) claim that postpositivist presumptively holds that complete truth cannot be attained; rather, this viewpoint holds that

erudition is derived from the gathering of information and substantiative data supporting a particular theory or principle.

Constructivist, according to Crotty (1998), presupposes experiences and environment based on past and social contexts enable individuals derive significance and essence. Thusly, as per Crotty, the researcher is able to attain profoundly weighty information and substantiative data through the interaction with the study's participants. This viewpoint Crotty holds also deems that inductive data elucidations would be impacted by the researcher's background and experiences, which, while important to highlight, is not ineludibly a flaw in qualitative research.

The transformative worldview is developed on the conviction that conventional research methodologies are inappropriate when studying disadvantaged populations. Thusly, as per Mertens (2010), the transformative perspective emphasizes that research that focuses on the quest of studying how to challenge issues pertaining to social oppression or discrimination must be amalgamated with policy and a political transformation plan.

In this study, the constructivist perspective was utilized as the philosophical framework. The goal of this study is to investigate the fundamental causes of hustle, the obstacles to influencer hustlers' upward mobility, and the strategies and best practices used by influencer hustlers who have achieved success and financial liberation. Thus, this study's goal is to address a significant real-world issue of inequality that leads many disadvantaged people to struggle and thus needs to be addressed. From this philosophical viewpoint, this study is qualitative research that utilizes open-ended interview questions to capture the experiences of influencer hustlers operating within the hustleconomy.

## **Strength of Qualitative Research**

There are fundamental variances between qualitative and quantitative research. As per Choy (2014), qualitative research techniques support investigators in probing and exploring the perspectives of both culturally homogenous and multi-cultural groups of people. This is due to the fact that as per Choy, the varying notions, beliefs and viewpoints within a community or group can be disentangled through qualitative research. Hence, social capital is participatory and thus stem from and transpires between members within a group or community. Subsequently, catechizing members of a community or group to riposte to particular queries and conjectural situations may produce a more robust and comprehensive data than that of quantitative research (Choy, 2014; Dudwick, et al., 2006). It is for this reason, in qualitative research, the study is usually conducted in the participant's environment, the arena in which the circumstance is occurring. Hence, the investigator's interactions, dialogues, and observations with the participants are thereby grounded in the actual situation rather than contrived conditions that are manufactured in spaces like a science laboratory. Accordingly, the encounters, interviews, and observations with the participants serves as the numerous sources by which the researcher is able to collect information that is vital for the qualitative research. Additionally, in qualitative research, information can also be garnered from avenues such as photographs, documents, and audio and audiovisual recordings. Thusly, the approach in which data is collected serves as one of the fundamental advantages of qualitative research.

In addition, Choy (2014) holds that another fundamental advantage of qualitative research is its capacity to investigate the essential principles, notions, and postulations of a topic. This is due to the fact that it is imperative to comprehend and appreciate what influences an organization, community, or group's activities and behaviors with the aim of wholly

comprehending it (Choy, 2014; Yauch & Steudel, 2003). Thus, qualitative research also encompasses the benefit of being wide-ranging and open-ended; hence, allotting participants the opportunity to highlight and contribute apprehensions and disquiets that are significant to them. Appropriately, it is for this reason, in most instances, a qualitative researcher will not attain a stipulated compendium of matters to study (Choy, 2014; Yauch & Steudel, 2003)

Another advantage of qualitative research is that it centers on the interviewee's opinions, insights, and elucidations instead of literature or the researcher's point of view. Disparate from quantitative research, qualitative research takes a comprehensive approach to a phenomena or quandary by considering all of the variables that influence it. Thusly, another key advantage of qualitative research is that it allots the researcher the capacity to provide a comprehensive depiction of the situation that is under investigation by combining several sources of data. Fittingly, qualitative research provides more multifarious data than that of a quantitative methodology which is based on programmed responses such as cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys used in quantitative research.

Another essential advantage of qualitative research might be observed throughout the study's methodology. Qualitative research utilizes an adaptive methodological approach, which allows for agility as the study progresses. Thusly, multiple factors such as interview questions, information gathering procedures, venues, and the addition of participants, could be altered throughout the research process. Modifications are a reaction to the issue's breadth and intricacy; hence, permitting researchers to derive new findings that would not have been possible with a linear data gathering process.

Furthermore, qualitative research is a methodology that is distinguished by initially inductive and then deductive data analysis process. By constructing connecting patterns from the

collective findings and working back and forth between the datasets, inductive reasoning enables the researcher to establish a readily intelligible set of themes and concepts (Heit & Rotello, 2010). The cooperation between the researcher and the participants is also a vital component of this process, as it enables the participants to contribute to the discovery of the themes and concepts that emerges from the dataset (Creswell, 2013). However, deductive reasoning entails working backwards from formerly recognized viewpoints or commonly accepted principles to predict or elucidate particular occurrences or discoveries (Crossman, 2016). Thusly, in qualitative research, after the data has been obtained, the qualitative research method proceeds with inductive data analysis, which includes cataloging major themes and discovering patterns. After that, the researcher performs a deductive data analysis to determine whether further data proof is needed to buttress the discovered themes.

One of the most significant advantages of qualitative research is the investigator. This is due to the fact that the investigator serves as a data analysis instrument. As a result, the researcher of a qualitative study serves as an apparatus for data gathering, analysis, and elucidation. Thus, although in quantitative methods, mechanisms such as surveys are employed to gather and understand the information, qualitative approaches necessitate that the investigator accumulate the information themselves through interviews, texts, and other sources. Furthermore, the information gathered in a qualitative study is analyzed and comprehended through coding and then categorizing the data into themes. Reflectivity is an elemental and imperative component of qualitative research because of the close interaction between the investigator and the data collection process. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), reflexivity is the researcher's consideration of how their experiences, background, and biases influence the study's themes, significance, implication, and administration.



## **Weakness of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research, while it has numerous advantages, it also attains some disadvantages. According to Choy (2014), qualitative research's disadvantage is that it is inefficient with time, and it could neglect an issue that is important to the study. Furthermore, Choy holds that another disadvantage in qualitative research is that the interpretations derived from the study could be hindered because individual experiences and understanding can impact the deductions of the study. Additionally, due to the open-ended nature of qualitative inquiry, the candidates of the study have more influence over the data gathered.

Establishing the data's dependability and validity can be difficult due to the researcher's impartiality. Furthermore, validity can be hard to ascertain because there may be few confirmed criteria that will be used as the benchmark for the study's methods or outcomes. As a result, Edmonds and Kennedy (2016) claim that qualitative research's adaptability, which allows researchers to perform exploratory investigations, can also be a disadvantage. This disadvantage makes establishing validity difficult due to the inability to minimize or distinguish the investigator's biases (Creswell, 2013; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). Also, according to Creswell (2013), its extensiveness is constrained due to its wide-ranging and exhaustive data gathering approach which can cause large scale research with a large sample population of participants to be difficult, unviable, and impracticable.

Nonetheless, after learning about the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research, this research draws from Creswell and Creswell (2018) on strategies for investigating lived experiences. As a result, by accurately specifying the demographics from which the study's sample is taken, this study seeks to overcome the noted shortcomings of qualitative research. In addition, this study chooses the sample group with care, using precise inclusion and exclusion

criteria. The investigator also recognized and accounted for personal biases and assured lucidity on the theoretical frameworks that influence this research.

## **Methodology**

As per Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research can be approached in five different ways which include narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, and phenomenology. Creswell and Creswell explain that narrative research is the methodology of collecting stories about an individual, group, or community's experiences. Individual characteristics and self-reflection are the general concept focused on in narrative studies as per Creswell and Poth (2018) and thus, throughout the study, stories can emerge as participants cooperate with the investigator. Grounded Theory is often employed in the conception of a novel theory established on the findings attained during the study according to Creswell and Poth. Hence, Creswell and Poth hold that the novel theory is depicted as the study's outcome. Ethnography inquiries as per Creswell and Creswell utilize observations and interviews to investigate a specific cultural community or group in their own geographical space. Thus, Creswell and Creswell maintain that ethnography research are sociological and anthropological inquiries that transpire over an extensive period. Case studies enables researchers to study a specific occurrence, system, individual, or group by utilizing interviews and field observations techniques as per Creswell and Creswell.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), phenomenology is a methodology for examining the real-life experiences and determining the core of such experiences of a group, organization, or community. Valle et al. (1989) claim that the intent and emphasis of phenomenology research is on an individual's, group's, or community's perception of reality; however, this does not separate or hold the individual, group, or community detached from

reality or the world around them. Therefore, as per Lavery (2003), phenomenology investigation strives to disentangle significance and essence in everyday life by questioning the context and experience of the phenomenon. Polkinghorne (1983) defines this emphasis as the pursuit of grasping or comprehending the importance and essence of an individual's, group or community's lived experience. As a result, perception is defined as what an individual, group, or community experience before thinking about it, without labeling or reasoning about it, and therefore it typically consists of what an individual, group, or community takes for granted or sees as evident (Husserl, 1970; Lavery, 2003). As a result, the purpose of analyzing these phenomenon and situations is to reconsider and assess them in order to discover novel or often disregarded importance and substance.

Therefore, Moerrer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) maintain that in order to interpret and achieve the meaning, essence, and significance from the participants of the study's experiences, phenomenological approach is often employed by researchers. This approach applies data gathering approaches such as interviews, observations, documents, and/or video and digital assets, and the investigator is the primary instrument used to derive the collective organization of the participants' experiences based on the information acquired (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Subsequently, in the quest to attain the data necessitated to elucidate this study's research questions and meet its objectives, this study takes a structured approach to descriptive phenomenological study, employing open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews.

In phenomenology, there are two primary approaches: descriptive or transcendental and interpretative. This study is a descriptive phenomenological investigation. According to Giorgi et al. (2017), descriptive phenomenology attempts to thoroughly elucidate the real life experiences

of the participants, after the data has been gathered, a thorough exploration of the data is performed within the framework of phenomenological reduction. Hence, as per to Giorgi et al., there can be no assertion that the analysis is phenomenological without the reduction.

Furthermore, as per Creswell (2013), a phenomenological study is a structured process. As a result, Creswell explains that the first phase in phenomenological research is to present the study and determine its principal objective. The second phase in phenomenological research according to Creswell is when relevant data must be collected and the third phase is when the data that was collected must be sorted, examined, and presented in a way that readers can understand. In the fourth phase of a phenomenological study, Creswell explains that the findings are composed in a cohesive manuscript, and the final phase is continuing to work on the findings as needed.

Phenomenological research incorporates open-ended communication and consideration along with rigorous organization between participants. This is the case during the data analysis and transcribing sections of the manuscript during which a robust organization for these stages may be discovered. Accordingly, the processes involve detecting important assertions made by participants, drawing meaning by establishing the essence and significance, and evaluating the results and deriving a conclusion. Furthermore, in composing the final report of the study, Polkinghorne (1989) explains that a widely acknowledged approach for writing a research report is to commence with the unprocessed data devoid of reaching any postulations about its significance; next, gradually construct a broad, coalescing narrative of the experience, connecting themes, and phenomenon.

### *Appropriateness of phenomenology methodology*

The main goal of this research is to discover the barriers and best practices and strategies employed by successful and financially liberated influencer hustlers to achieve success and financial freedom in hustlenomics. After considering the five qualitative research methodologies, for this study, the phenomenological approach is deemed most appropriate for this research. This is because qualitative research, according to Creswell (2013), stems from personal experiences and a curiosity in a subject sparked by prospects that allot the researcher the physical and /or mental exposure to the participants and their environments.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that a phenomenological study is suitable when trying to analyze and comprehend the collective significance and essence of a group's shared experience of a phenomenon. Furthermore, as per McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a phenomenological investigation gives the researcher the opportunity to translate a group's actual experiences into a narrative that captures the essence and relevance of the group and thus, allotting space for consideration, deliberation, and exploration. Additionally, phenomenological research, according to Moustakas (1994), consists of interviewing a small group of participants based on assertions presented and thus this is why interviews are the most appropriate methodology in gathering information when there are limited participants in the study. This approach according to Creswell (2013) enables all participants to be immersed in the process through an open-ended interview process. Thus, utilizing an open-ended interview style, this study was able to comprehend and chronicle influencer hustlers' lived experiences, as well as the best practices, techniques, and challenges they confront when attempting to achieve success and financial independence in hustlenomics, using a phenomenological approach.

## Research Design

This is a qualitative phenomenological study. The best practices, strategies, and obstacles that influencer hustlers confront in their drive for success and financial freedom in hustlenomics were investigated and understood using this study approach. Accordingly, this study used open-ended interview techniques to acquire qualitative information from participants chosen for their unique experiences into the topics this study intended to address. The findings were organized into themes derived from the data acquired for the purpose of deriving meaning and achieving the study's objectives. As a consequence, the participants' experiences were viewed from a phenomenological perspective in this qualitative study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

*Population.* Grosseohme (2014) recommends gathering thorough accounts from individuals who have witnessed the phenomenon being studied with the purpose of characterizing and postulating a thorough depiction of it. Therefore, the population of this study consisted of hustlers that are influencers who are engage in the hustleconomy, often known as the informal economy in order, to earn an income.

*Analysis unit.* An influencer hustler that has attained success and financial liberation operating within the hustleconomy that met the following criteria was considered the analysis unit for this study.

- Operate and earn income within the hustleconomy
- Can be identified and contacted via social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, and YouTube
- An influencer with over 50,000 followers on their social media platform
- has multiple gigs or hustles
- Seeks financial liberation through hustlenomics

*Sample size.* Phenomenological study, according to Grossoehme (2014), should have a small sample size in order to appropriately represent the phenomenon being studied. Hence, as per Creswell and Creswell (2018), a small sample of contributors should be engaged in the research so that detailed information on each participant can be collected. However, scholars attain differing views on what an appropriate sample size ought to be in a phenomenological study. Creswell and Creswell urge that a sample size of between three to ten individuals is appropriate for a phenomenological study. Similarly, Dukes (1984) also advises that a sample size of three to ten contributors is suitable; however, Morse (1994) recommends six to ten individuals as a proper sample size. Polkinghorne (1989) suggests a range of five to ten participants, whereas Guetterman (2015) suggests that a phenomenological study should attain a sample scope of between eight to thirty-one participants. As per Alase (2017), the sample size should be between two to twenty-five contributors.

Nonetheless, despite the differing opinions on what serves as the best sample size, it is apparent from literature that employing a smaller sample size is appropriate in order to circumvent saturation and apportion for an amplified meaningful consideration of each contributor of the study. Hence, it is for this reason that the sample size of this study was set for 15 participants based on an amalgamation of the aforementioned guidelines from literature.

*Purposive sampling.* Purposive sampling is a methodology utilized in selecting individuals specifically because they attain the appropriate characteristics that is relevant to the study. Accordingly, purposive sampling is not an arbitrary methodology and thus does not hinge upon any basic concepts. Thus, as per Grossoehme (2014), employing a purposive sample amplifies the possibility of getting comprehensive depictions of everyday experiences from the contributors of the study. Along these lines, as per Creswell and Creswell (2018), purposive

sampling is a methodology for intentionally and purposefully selecting a group of individuals who are cognizant about and attain a personal experience with the phenomenon being studied. As a result, according to Creswell and Creswell, purposive sampling necessitates that the investigator decides on the participants that will be engaged in the study because it implies that the investigator can decisively apprise perceptions of the predicament and phenomena the study is examining. Bernard (2002) also holds that it is compulsory for participants to be alacritous and able to articulate their experience in a thoughtful manner.

Furthermore, purposive sampling, according to Barratt et al. (2014), is an avenue for studying and comprehending hard to reach or hidden demographics and thus depends on the researcher's familiarity of the subject as well as, knowledge of the targeted population. As a result, purposive sampling, as defined by Etikan et al. (2016), is an approach in which the researcher determines what information is essential to be studied and hence executes an appropriate methodology to locate individuals who attain the knowledge and real-life experience needed and are cooperative to supply the data needed for the study. Purposive sampling was employed in this study since it is a suitable methodology that can be discerned in the collection of literature-based standards for the inclusion and exclusion conditions utilized to recruit influencer hustlers for participation.

*Participant section.* In the pursuit to identify and select individuals who attain the requirements to partake in this study, a vetting approach that included the following steps was employed.

- Engendered a master list of potential participants for the study. This process was accomplished by conducting a comprehensive search utilizing the unit of analysis as the criteria to identify influencer hustlers. The search was conducted on social media



platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, and YouTube. Thus, the investigator created a database utilizing excel to store the master list. The master list included the name of the influencer, platform in which they are engaged in, their contact information if available, the type of hustle(s) they are engaged in, gender, and notes section that includes other information and observations the investigator attained from reviewing the influencer's platform.

- Established the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After generating a master list of potential participants of the study, criteria for inclusion and exclusion were established to help further tighten the number of candidates that qualified to participate in the study.
- Determined maximum variation requirements. The maximum variance criterion was defined as age, gender, educational background, hustle type, social economic background, and location. As a result, the investigator carefully chose a diverse group of participants based on the maximum variation requirements to ensure that the data collected reflected the phenomenon's overall relevance and character.
- *Criteria for inclusion.* The criterion for inclusion included the following:
  - must be an influencer hustler
  - must earn income in the hustleconomy
  - can be located and contacted via social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, Spotify and YouTube
  - individuals who have multiple gigs or hustle
  - an influencer with over 50,000 followers on their social media platform
  - influencer that seeks financial liberation through hustlenomics
  - influencer hustlers based in Nigeria or USA

- individuals who assent to be recorded.
- *Criteria for exclusion.*
- candidate refuses to allow the interview to be recorded.
- candidate is unavailable for an interview in between March and June 2022

*Maximum variation.* As per Creswell (2013), maximum variation sampling is appropriate for qualitative research. Creswell goes on to explain that maximum variation sampling enhances the possibility that the findings would depict the diversity or variations of opinions when the investigator optimizes diversity at the start of the investigation. As a result, maximum variation sampling, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), is a typical qualitative research methodology that entails creating some criteria that distinguish individuals ahead of time and then selecting participants who differ significantly on the criteria.

Thus, for this study, participants were chosen by employing purposive sampling with maximum variation. Purposive sampling is an approach utilized to engender the sample of a study that apporions the researcher the capacity to handpick individuals for the purpose of ensuring that the paramount achievable sample size for the study is achieved. Therefore, the researcher draws on their prior experience and knowledge to determine which categories of subjects would be particularly well suited for their research. Accordingly, Creswell and Poth (2018) claim that utilizing maximum variation criterion allots qualitative investigators the capacity to select a broad group of participants, which is helpful in strengthening the quality of the data. Thus, this study embraced the diversity of the influencer hustler community by ensuring that the sample pool of participants reflected the diversity of the segment and thus followed the maximum variation criteria which included age, gender, educational background, type of hustle, social economic background, and location.

## Protection of Human Subjects

The protection of human subjects was taken into account and given great consideration in this study. Therefore, this study complies with Pepperdine University's Internal Review Board (IRB) requirements, which necessitates researchers to acquire consent before carrying out research with human subjects. As a result, the following procedures was taken to protect the study's human subjects and mitigate any ethical concerns.

- IRB approval. An IRB permission application was submitted to Pepperdine University's IRB department before the recruitment of the study's participants for review and approval. The application went over the research design, methodology, and processes. Documents such as the investigator's CITI program certification that shows that the investigator has undergone adequate training and is certified in research ethics, and compliance as well as the study's Informed Consent form was included in the IRB authorization application. The Informed Consent form discussed the advantages and disadvantages of participating in the study.
- Recruitment script and Informed Consent. The investigator utilized the Recruitment Script during the process of identifying and enlisting potential participants for the study. The Recruitment Script also explained the potential hazards and advantages of participating in the study. Similarly, the Informed Consent form disclosed the advantages and disadvantages of participating in the study, as well as the procedures to be followed. Prior to each interview, the investigator received a signed copy of the Informed Consent form from the participant.
- Risk to Participants. During the process of this study, the participants were exposed to minimal social, physical, and psychological hazard because the interview was of a

non-sensitive nature and thus the study provided no greater danger than would be expected in everyday life.

- Safety protocols. In order to ensure the highest level of safety for the participants, the investigator made all essential efforts by safely securing in all materials such as notes, transcripts of the interviews, and the zoom and audio recording of the interview. So therefore, all handwritten documents such as the investigator's notes were stored in a locked file cabinet for the length of the study. All electronic materials were also secured in an electronically locked file. Upon the completion of the dissertation process, the investigator eliminated all of the materials.

De-identification procedures were also used to maintain participant confidentiality.

As a result, all direct identification such as names were eliminated and replaced with generic pseudonyms such as Participant A.

### **Data Collection**

To make certain that the process of the study is seamless, and the integrity of the information acquired is maintained, during this study, appropriate data gathering protocols was observed. Therefore, the data gathering methodologies described by Creswell and Creswell (2018) was employed in the data gathering activities of this study. As per Creswell and Creswell, the investigator should actively and purposefully select individuals, thus a master list of potential participants was compiled using social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Spotify, and YouTube. Participants who matched the master list's requirements which was based on the specified unit of analysis for this study was contacted via social media sites. An IRB approved Recruitment Script was used as the introductory email. The scripted email introduced the investigator, it explained the study's objective and inquired if the potential volunteer was

interested in participating. Once the prospective participant has given their consent, a follow up email was sent requesting the confirmation of essential details of the interview such as the schedule. Participants signed Informed Consent form was also obtained through email prior to the interview. The interview was scheduled during the months of May and June 2022.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the fact that participants might feel safer participating in the study virtually, the semi-structured interview was conducted via Zoom video conferencing platform (<https://zoom.us/>). The investigator arrived 30 minutes early for each interview. The investigator employed two devices to record each interview: the recording on the Zoom platform and a tape recorder. The investigator attained a printout of the study's open-ended interview questions with space to jot down notes and ruminate on observations and what is learned during the interview. Upon the completion of each interview, the investigator transcribed the audio from each interview into a printed copy to collect the data. Upon the completion of this study, the investigator conducted 12 interviews with influencer hustlers. The investigator gained a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the participants' actual experiences in the hustleconomy through semi-structured interviews with open-ended interview questions, which facilitated the process of answering the research questions.

### **Interview Protocol**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the interview protocol is fundamentally the researcher's interview approach, which must be implemented during each interview. Hence, Creswell and Creswell go on to explain that the interview process is influenced by six areas of concentration, which serve as essential aspects to assist in the design of the interview protocol. These six areas include:

1. Fundamentals of the interview. The name of the contributor, the time and location of the interview, and the length of the conversation was all noted in advance.
2. Introduction. The investigator created a scripted set of instructions to guarantee that nothing was forgotten and that each interview was conducted as efficiently as possible, especially because the investigator was doing numerous interviews.
3. First question. To calm the participant and establish a connection, the investigator commenced the interview by welcoming the participant, thanking them for their participation and connecting with them with an icebreaker and light talk. The light conversation focused on the participant's profession and typical life questions. No personal inquiries were made.

During this time, the investigator discussed the Informed Consent form with the participant, confirmed their consent in order to commence recording, and connected the recording devices. The investigator also went over the amount and the contents of the interview questions as well as the estimated length of the interview. The investigator notified the participant that the interview will be semi-structured and that if they have any extra questions, they will be able to present them at the end of the interview.

4. Interview questions. The interview questions were reviewed by three experts which comprises the dissertation committee of the investigator. The investigator also made sure that any questions asked during the interview are phrased and delivered in a pleasant manner. The investigator actively listened to the participant and used the printout of the interview questions to jot down notes or ruminate on observations and learnings during the interview

5. Probes. The open-ended questions of the interview allotted the investigator the chance to probe when it was appropriate. Accordingly, the investigator probed when the investigator deemed necessary for additional lucidity and comprehension into the response to the inquiry
6. Instructions for concluding. The participant was appreciated for their time, participation, and honesty. During this time, the investigator also assured the participant of their confidentiality and they also got the chance to present any last-minute queries. Upon concluding the interview, the investigator spent some time alone to reflect on the interview and jot down any ruminations.

### **Interview Techniques**

An interview, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), entails social contact based on dialogue. Creswell and Poth go on to explain that in qualitative research, the investigator uses the interview to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from the viewpoint of the contributor. Furthermore, as per Creswell and Creswell (2018), the researcher should be organized and establish a calm, relaxed setting for the participant; thus, acquaintance with the interview questions is beneficial so that the researcher appears prepared, engaged, and authentic and not just reading from a script. As a result, the investigator of this study was acquainted with the interview questions in the effort to be genuine and at ease throughout the interview process. With this approach, the participants felt at ease. Additionally, before commencing the official phase of each interview, the investigator engaged in an icebreaker and light conversation with each participant in the effort of establishing a calm atmosphere with each participant so that they would fully, comfortably, and truthfully answer the interview questions.

In this study, a semi-structured interview technique was employed. Thus, the investigator utilized open-ended questions to elicit thorough responses from each candidate (Baumbusch, 2010). Additionally, the investigator employed a determined interview protocol in line with obtaining the replies that is necessitous for acquiring the data that is essential to answering the research questions that guides this research.

*Relationship between research and interview questions.*

The interview questions are unambiguously aligned to the study's four research questions. As a consequence, the correlation between the research and the interview questions is depicted in Table 1.



**Table 1***Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Corresponding Interview Questions</b>
RQ 1: What challenges are faced by hustlers when engaged in the hustle economy?	IQ 1: What are the most difficult challenges you have to overcome as a hustler?
RQ 2: What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful hustlers that are engaged in the hustle economy?	IQ 2: How do you stay motivated in the midst of these difficulties?  IQ 3: How did you conquer your most difficult challenges?  IQ 4: Was this the best course of action in retrospect? If not... Which course of action would you suggest?
RQ 3: How do successful hustlers define, measure, and track success?	IQ 5: How do you define success as a hustler?  IQ 6: How do you measure and track your success as a hustler?
RQ 4: Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers?	IQ 7: What are the actions that an aspiring hustler should take to be successful in the hustle economy?  IQ 8: What kind of support system do you recommend for an aspiring hustler?  IQ 9: What is the greatest way for a hustler to position themselves in order to attain success as a hustler?

*Validity and reliability.* To assure the study's validity, a two-step approach was used to determine validity. The two steps included prima-facie and content validity, and expert validity.

*Prima-facie and content validity.* Prima-facie validity was established via the creation of research and interview questions that were explicitly associated with one another as depicted in

Table 1. The research topics was examined and approved by the dissertation committee before moving further with the study.

*Expert review validity.* The research questions were be evaluated by a panel of three experts, Dr. Maria Brahme, Dr. Farzin Majidi, and Dr. Gabriella Miramontes who make up the dissertation committee of the investigator. The dissertation committee suggested modifications and voted on whether the suggested changes resulted in satisfactory outcomes. The committee chair made the final decision when a majority of the committee members cannot agree. Table 2 includes the expert validated version of the interview questions.

**Table 2**

*Expert Validated Version of Research Questions and Correlating Interview Questions*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Correlating Interview Questions</b>
RQ 1: What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?	Tell me about your hustle and how you came up with it. Thinking about your hustle(s)  IQ 1: What were the most difficult challenges you had to overcome? IQ2: Were there challenges that you expected and those that were unexpected? IQ3: Do these challenges come in phases?
RQ 2: What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers that are engaged in hustlenomics?	IQ 4: How did you conquer your most difficult challenges? IQ5: How did you overcome your day to day challenges IQ6: What resources did you have available to you or sought? IQ 7: How do you stay motivated in the midst of these difficulties? IQ8: What personal characteristics do you have that greatly contributed to your success?
RQ 3: How do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success?	IQ 9: How do you define success as a hustler? IQ 10: How do you measure and track your success as a hustler?

Research Questions	Correlating Interview Questions
RQ 4: Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful influencers have for future aspiring hustlers?	IQ 11: What is one action/decision that you wished you could go back in time and do over IQ12: What would you tell a new hustler if she / he asked you “Is it worth it?”

### Statement of Personal Bias

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research necessitates the investigator serving as the instrument of data gathering and assessment to consider personal biases, prejudices, and ideals. This study is of considerable importance to the investigator because the investigator is a hustler who has also gone through many of the same challenges as the participants of the study. As a result, the investigator’s personal perceptions, experiences, and connections with other hustlers all contribute to a level of bias that must be addressed throughout this study. With the investigator's bias in mind, the investigator separated herself from her personal experience as a hustler, questioning the interviewees neutrally and gathering information from their comments sans bias. This reduction approach allotted this study a highly reproducible methodology for comparable or prospect studies that builds on the discoveries and outcomes of this study.

*Bracketing and epoché.* According to Pathak (2017), the primary goal of a phenomenological investigation is to reveal the importance, configuration, and substance of a group's or person's direct experience surrounding a given phenomenon. It is for this reason according to Giorgi et al (2017), that how awareness displays and behaves in the researcher of a phenomenological study must be taken into account. Thus, throughout a phenomenological study, the researcher's awareness and mindset must be consciously cogitated and reported. Bracketing and epoché, is the admission of one's own personal biases. According to Creswell

and Creswell (2018), the investigator should bracket themselves from the study by disclosing their personal experiences with the topic. Additionally, bracketing may assist in enabling the researcher to concentrate on the participants' experiences without being lured into the research themselves. Hence, to minimize the investigator's personal bias, the investigator employed bracketing approaches in this study.

The investigator utilized bracketing and epoché approaches to reduce the impact of the investigator's biases and presumptions on this study's outcomes. Due to the investigator's personal biases, it was critical that the investigator employed bracketing and epoché methods to protect the data's validity and appropriately evaluate the participants' responses (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Giorgi et al., 2017). By setting biases aside through bracketing and epoché, the investigator was afforded the opportunity to embrace a phenomenological orientation (Giorgi et al., 2017). As a consequence, the investigator is devoid of rigid notions and prejudices about the topic and hence engaged the interview process with an objective and amenable attitude (Moustakas, 1994). Journaling and note-taking were the approach of bracketing that was employed by the investigator in this study (Tufford & Newman, 2012). By jotting down notes and journaling as the study progressed, the investigator was allotted the chance to contemplate genuinely on the information gathered and be more sentient of assumptions and prejudices.

### **Data Analysis**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) offer a five-step data analysis process, which the researcher employed in this study

- Step one: Transcription.

During this step, the investigator transcribed the interviewees recordings. The investigator listened to the zoom and tape recorded recording multiple times to ensure

that all information was properly captured and shared with the investigator by participants.

- Step Two: Read the data.

The investigator read the information obtained from the interviews to attain a general appreciation of meaning from the data. During this phase, the investigator was allotted the chance to discern participants' attitudes and the emergent themes coming from the data as well as noted discoveries on the interview transcripts.

- Step three: Coding.

Coding is the third phase in the data analysis process. During this phase, the investigator employed codes to characterize, categorize, and understand the data. As per Creswell and Creswell (2018), Vivo coding enabled the investigator to derive codes straight from respondents, while pattern coding enabled the investigator to form codes from a word or phrase that encapsulates an activity. Thusly, as advised by Creswell and Creswell, the investigator was able to achieve descriptive and one-worded codes by utilizing an amalgamation of vivo and pattern coding.

During this phase, de-identification techniques were utilized to ensure the confidentiality of participants. As per Garfinkel (2015), de-identification is a technique for removing personally identifiable information from data that is gathered, utilized, preserved, and shared during research. Thus, all direct identifiers such as name was removed and replaced with pseudonyms names that are generic such as Participant A.

- Step four: Themes and description.

Themes were engendered from the groupings discovered during the coding process. All of the themes were buttressed by the statements given by the participants, which depicted

a variety of viewpoints. Grounded on the interview data, an account of the participants' overall viewpoints was documented as well. Hence, during this process, accounts, and quotes from the participants, and opposing participant viewpoints were also documented.

- Step five: Findings.

To guarantee validity and inter-rater reliability, the data from this study was triangulated. By enlisting two colleagues from Pepperdine University's EDOL program to act as co-coders, the investigator achieved validity and inter-rater reliability. Subsequently, this technique ensured that all significant and pertinent themes that emanated from the study were reported, while also jettisoning the investigator's bias.

Additionally, to link and convey the discoveries of this research, a discourse of the themes extracted from the data gathered were utilized. Consequently, the study's discoveries and outcomes were assessed and evaluated in light of the literature pertaining to influencer hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy.

### **Chapter Three Summary**

The methods employed in this investigation was described in this chapter. This account comprises the research design and methodology for accomplishing trustworthy qualitative study. This chapter featured a comprehensive explication of the research design, approach, and procedures used in this study, as well as the nature of the study and the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative phenomenological research. Subsequently, this qualitative research provides a phenomenological examination of obstacles faced by effective and financially liberated influencer hustlers and the best practices and strategies they utilized to attain success in hustlenomics. For this study, the investigator employed a phenomenological technique because it

allows for the extrapolation of significance and essence from the real-life experiences of influencer hustlers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

This study included a sample size of 15 influencer hustlers. The participants were chosen via purposive sampling with maximum variation. The investigator compiled a master list of possible participants using social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, Spotify, and YouTube which are popular with influencer hustlers. Particularized standards for inclusion and exclusion for the research were provided in this chapter to assist in capsulizing the master list. A discussion of the procedures for protecting the contributors of the study as established by Pepperdine University's IRB was provided.

This chapter also contains a full account of the semi-structured interview data gathering methodology that was employed, as well as the interview techniques and protocol. The two-step approach of ascertaining validity that was employed in this study; prima-facie and content validity and expert review validity was also discussed in this chapter. In order to present the investigator's prospective biases, included in this chapter is a statement of the investigator's personal bias. This chapter went over the bracketing and epoché techniques in great detail. Finally, this chapter highlighted the processes for data analysis recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The hustleconomy's quick growth can be credited to the numerous applications and online platforms such as Amazon, Facebook, Instagram, Squarespace, Lyft, Fiverr, Tic Tok, and YouTube that make it simpler for hustlers to sell their goods and services and reach their target audience. People from around the world are motivated to be immersed in hustlenomics for a plethora of reasons. Some people delve into hustlenomics to make ends meet because they are unemployed or underemployed, while others do so because they want more flexibility, autonomy, money, and space to pursue their passions. Thus, hustlers participate in hustlenomics in order to gain freedom from their conditions and / or to discover new and better income earning alternatives.

Accordingly, the goal of this research is to create a guide of approaches, strategies, and best practices that hustlers utilize to achieve financial liberty and success in hustlenomics. A literature review and phenomenological investigation based on interviews of 12 effective influencer hustlers were used to achieve this study's goals. As a result, in order to accomplish the research's objectives, this study set out to address the following research questions:

- RQ 1: What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 2: What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers that are engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 3: How do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success?
- RQ 4: Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful influencer hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers?



The interview questions engendered from the research questions were conceived to offer an enhanced appreciation of the challenges hustlers confront and the techniques they use to achieve and maintain financial freedom and success in hustlenomics. As a result, the open-ended interview questions used in this phenomenological study were conceived to confer participants the space and chance to offer their perspective, insight, and knowledge on their experiences while engaged in hustlenomics. The participants' candor allowed for a straightforward coding and interpretation process which was vital in answering the research questions and achieving the study's goals. Hence the interviewees were asked the following questions:

- IQ 1: What were the most difficult challenges you had to overcome?
- IQ2: Were there challenges that you expected and those that were unexpected?
- IQ3: Do these challenges come in phases?
- IQ 4: How did you conquer your most difficult challenges?
- IQ5: How did you overcome your day to day challenges?
- IQ6: What resources did you have available to you or sought?
- IQ 7: How do you stay motivated in the midst of these difficulties?
- IQ8: What personal characteristics do you have that greatly contributed to your success?
- IQ 9: How do you define success as a hustler?
- IQ 10: How do you measure and track your success as a hustler?
- IQ 11: What is one action/decision that you wished you could go back in time and do over?
- IQ12: What would you tell a new hustler if she / he asked you "Is it worth it?"

Probing questions were asked when there were ambiguous responses or there was a need for additional elucidation. This gave the opportunity for the participant to explicate or illuminate

on their response. This approach helped in attaining as accurately as possible lucidity and the appropriate intention and essence of the participants' response. Furthermore, since all of the participants were at ease during the study, no inquiry was found to be inappropriate.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the results attained from the participants' answers during the study while also furnishing a detailed description of the data collection, data analysis, and the inter-rater review processes. The responses of the participants were coded, categorized, and analyzed to draw out the emerging themes derived from the participants responses in order to summarize and interpret the study's findings. As a result, the sentiments, perspectives, knowledge, and experiences that was provided by the effective influencer hustlers that participated in the study could be accurately depicted.

### **Participants**

Participants were chosen for their capacity to convey their viewpoints, expertise, and experiences in sufficient detail in order to contribute to the profundity of knowledge and wisdom that is essential to answering the research questions. The study's initial proposal was to interview 15 influencer hustlers, who operate multiple gigs and hustles, that are based in Nigeria and USA, and attain more than 50 thousand social media followers. After the ninth interview, however, it became evident that the researcher was reaching saturation.. Three further interviews were conducted to ensure saturation and agreement and none of the three last interviews yielded any substantial new information or themes. As a result, this study was completed with the interview of 12 participants after incorporating the feedback of the last three participants.

Although outreach was conducted for participants that are based in USA and Nigeria, only influencer hustlers in the USA were available and willing to participate in the study. Additionally, it was observed during the study that not all effective influencers require a large

following to be successful. For example, informer type influencers such as real estate brokers in developing areas do not typically achieve or require substantial followership like entertainer or infotainer type influencers. This is due to the fact that their business is a small niche market with a small number of followers needed to enhance sales. Likewise, informers who are thought leaders who focus on narrow subjects have found that they do not need a vast following to be successful. In fact, it was revealed that cultivating a narrower, more intimate following, which some influencers refer to as their tribe or community, benefits them more. The audience of the informer influencer feel invested in the influencer's work because of this more intimate platform, which leads to increased sales for the influencer. As a result, their platform can be effective even with a modest number of followers. For this reason, as shown in Table 3, the informer influencers of this study do not attain over 50 thousand followers despite the fact they are very effective influencer hustlers.

**Table 3**

*Participants of Study Profile*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Type of Influencer</b>	<b>Hustle Type</b>	<b>Followers</b>
A	Informer	Small niche business owner, educator, speaker	25K
B	Entertainer	Videographer, musician	145K
C	Infotainer	Serial entrepreneur, TV personality / entertainer, lifestyle	578K
D	Entertainer	Lifestyle, event planning, fashion, public relations	600K
E	Informer	Niche subject matter coach, educator, author	24K
F	Informer	Real estate: wholesale and flipping properties	131k
G	Entertainer	Lifestyle, scientist	44K
H	Entertainer	Lifestyle, fashion	153K
I	Entertainer	Art, event promotion,	52K
J	Infotainer	Serial entrepreneur	28K
K	Infotainer	Lifestyle, education, scientist	63K
L	Infotainer	Lifestyle, researcher, advocacy	126K

## Data Collection

The IRB approval (Appendix A) to gather data for this study was acquired on March 28, 2022. Hence, the participant recruitment process began immediately after the IRB approval was attained on March 29, 2022. Leveraging social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Spotify, and YouTube, a master list of 200 influencers was amassed. The identified influencers were contacted through email and/or social media platforms by utilizing the IRB-approved recruiting script (Appendix B).

Although participant recruiting began immediately after IRB approval on March 29, 2022, interviews did not commence until May. The month of April was devoted to recruiting, sensitizing, and scheduling interviews with the influencers. The investigator was able to schedule 15 influencers willing to participate in the study and 12 participants were interviewed. The first interview took place on May 4, 2022, while the last one was held on June 3, 2022.

All participants who agreed to be interviewed received the list of interview questions to review and prepare for the interview, as well as an Informed Consent form (Appendix C) with a signature request. All of the interviews occurred over Zoom. Each conversation began with an icebreaker and a light-hearted dialogue about their hustle and how it all began. During this time, the participant was also briefed about the interview procedure and given the opportunity to ask questions. The participant was reminded that the interview would be recorded before the formal interview began, and a verbal approval was obtained before the interview and recording began. The interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour, with the shortest being 30 minutes and the longest spanning an hour. The duration of the interview was determined by the participant's oration as well as the level of depth in their responses and the anecdotes they used to support their answers. When there was a need for lucidity, the investigator posed a probing

question. Table 4 depicts the list of participants and the date of the interview. The order of participant's interview date ascertains the letter assigned to the participant. Accordingly, Participant A was the first influencer that was interviewed and Participant L was the final participant to be interviewed.

**Table 4**

*Dates of the Participant Interviews*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
Participant A	May 4, 2022
Participant B	May 5, 2022
Participant C	May 17, 2022
Participant D	May 24, 2022
Participant E	May 27, 2022
Participant F	May 28, 2022
Participant G	June 1, 2022
Participant H	June 1, 2022
Participant I	June 2, 2022
Participant J	June 2, 2022
Participant K	June 3, 2022
Participant L	June 3, 2022

**Data Analysis**

The responses of the participants derived during the interview process served as the primary source of data for this study. Accordingly, the interviews in this study were reviewed in order to construct a data analysis procedure that could be used to evaluate the findings and answer the research questions. Concurring with Moustakas (1994), before evaluating the data, the investigator bracketed all personal prejudices and bias about hustlenomics and influencer hustlers in order to circumvent influencing the interpretation and analysis of the data. Hence, preceding and subsequent to each interview, bias, reflections, and thoughts were written in a journal by the investigator as an observation (Tufford and Newman, 2012). Consequently, the

participants' narratives were the only ones taken into account during the data analysis process.

Each interview was transcribed by the investigator once it was completed. The investigator transcribed the interviews by printing out the transcripts provided by the Zoom video conferencing platform. Then the investigator meticulously reviewed each line of the transcript while watching the recorded video to guarantee that the whole interview was accurately documented. This method was also instrumental in assisting the investigator grasp, understand, and analyze the information gathered during the interview. Upon completing the transcribing process, the investigator studied the transcripts in their entirety, coded the data, and extracted patterns and themes that were emerging from the derived data.

An excel spreadsheet was engendered to facilitate in the coding process. The interview questions and participants were structured and categorized in the excel spreadsheet. The derived information was coded using in-vivo words which mirrored the participant's viewpoints and insights. For each interview question, codes were developed, then examined and organized into two to seven reemerging themes. The spreadsheet included tables that were sorted by each interview question with the relevant codes and themes once it was finished. After that, an in-depth description was incorporated with the derived themes. Direct statements from the participants reflecting their personal perceptions of the problems as well as the approaches, strategies, and best practices for achieving success in hustlenomics were collected. These statements were useful in presenting and accurately articulating the participants' perspectives and ideas in order to extract the essence of their input.

### **Inter-Rater Review Process**

The inter-rater review method was used to confirm the validity of the coding process. After the first three interviews were coded and themes were identified, the inter-rater review process was carried out. Two doctorate candidates in Pepperdine University's Organizational Leadership program were asked to serve as peer reviewers. They were selected because they were also enrolled in the Excellence and Innovation Program (EIP) and were working on analogous research topics, hence, they were acquainted with hustlenomics and the phenomenological approach.

The researcher provided the reviewers with the verified transcripts of the interviews as well as the excel spreadsheet used for coding in order to facilitate the inter-rater review process. The researcher also expounded on the coding process, the emergent themes, and discussed relevant literature to further assist in the inter-rater review process. In order to elucidate the input from the peer reviewers, the feedback from the peer reviewers was analyzed and then discussed.

### **Data Display**

In this section, the information amassed during the study is assembled, categorized, and depicted by the research question and the analogous interview questions. Thusly, for each research question, the derived frequent perspectives, terms, and phrases were clustered together. Furthermore, a frequency graph is encompassed with each interview question to offer a visual illustration of the results obtained from the participants. Hence, the similarity that resulted in the themes depicted in the frequency graphs was shaped by the terms and statements shared by the participants of the study.

Several themes emerged from each interview question. Thus, each frequency graph is augmented by an elucidation of each theme, as well as quotes from the participants that assists in

furnishing context and the essence of the participants perspective and insight. For this reason, the statements utilized in this section are direct quotes derived from the participants. Therefore, in order to maintain the veracity of the information shared, the statements from the participants are direct quotes that may include conversational jargon and broken or unfinished sentences.

During this phase of the study, every endeavor was expended to ensure that the investigator's opinion, insight, or perspective was excluded.

### **Research Question 1**

RQ 1: What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?

The first research question identifies the perceived challenges hustlers operating within the hustleconomy encounter. In an attempt to uncover the obstacles hustlers encounter as they strive for success in hustlenomics, the following three interview questions were asked:

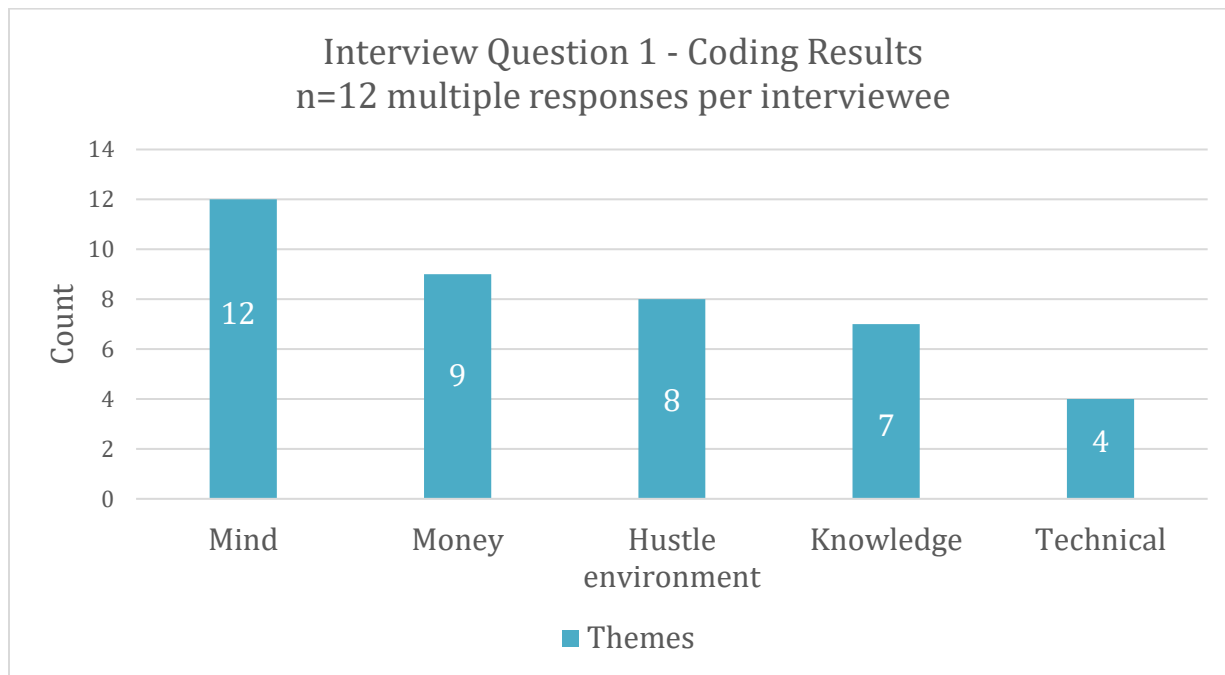
- IQ 1: What were the most difficult challenges you had to overcome?
- IQ2: Were there challenges that you expected and those that were unexpected?
- IQ3: Do these challenges come in phases?

### ***Interview Question 1***

What were the most difficult challenges you had to overcome? Upon the completion of the data analysis process for IQ 1, a total of 40 responses were derived with five themes emerging from the data. The five themes that materialized were: (a) Mindset, (b) Money, (c) Hustle environment, (d) Knowledge, and (e) Technical. Figure 1 shows the five emergent themes from the replies to IQ 1 are depicted in the frequency chart. The numbers indicate the frequency in which the theme appeared in the answers.



Figure 1. Interview Question 1



*Mind.* The mind was identified as the most significant obstacle that hustlers encounter in hustlenomics by all 12 participants of the study. The mind was described to be impacted internally and externally. The internal impact describes the struggle in the mind of the hustler. Participant H described these internal struggles as “the war with myself in my mind.” Participant C said, “it is the fight with the imposter, fear and doubt.” According to Participant B “you know how they say we are our biggest enemy, I think mindset, for me, was like one of the most difficult things to get ahold of.” Participant A stated that “You know I'm not a professional, you know all of the self-doubt that went into that. Why would people want to watch me, why would people want to learn from me, and getting over that first and continuous hurdle was really hard.”

Whereas the external impact on the mind can be attributed to issues pertaining to stress, disappointment, frustration, and anger derived from operating within the ambiguous and challenging environment of the hustleconomy. For instance, Participant J explained that “the most difficult thing is the stress. It is hard to make money. Nothing is easy so much competition

and you don't even know if the hustle will bring in anything. I get mad and pissed after pumping so much energy and money into my hustle just to lose it. It always happens and it messes with my mind." Participant F elucidates that "more so than anything is the mental cost if you don't have any early success, it can be very discouraging frustrating to continue on."

*Money.* The theme of money was identified by 9 participants as a challenge faced by hustlers. This issue of money was described to have two components: lack of access to capital and instable income. Participant C explained that "starting any hustle requires capital. The funding disparities are tremendous if you look at the most recent statistics, they say that last year there was over, like \$300 billion dollars that went into venture backed startups and so less than 2% of that went to women, less than 1% went to African Americans in the United States. You know we're constantly battling that so that's a huge thing." Participant D also shared that "I think it's very hard to start as a hustler, because you just have no money. Even starting a social media platform requires money to buy equipment, pay for content creation and many other things so without money there is problems." Likewise, Participant H explains that "I didn't have a whole lot of money, and like I've seen you have to invest time and money into this race and every business, regardless of how cheap the business is to start at a point you realize that in order to move to the next level, you may have to maybe buy a course or get some coaching or buy a tool and all of that involves money."

Participant I and K talked about the other challenge money creates which is the instability of income. Participant I shared that "as a hustler you don't know when you get your next payday. I can't tell my landlord that I am working hard on a hustle that is yet to pay. So, I have to have many streams of income." Participant K explained that "money is not always stable with hustle.

Especially when it's a new business, it takes time. Some months I make plenty money, but sometimes it's not very good so I hustle hard. I don't just wait like people with 9-5."

*Hustle environment.* 8 participants of the study found the hustle environment to be a challenging space to operating in. This is due to the fact that they believe it is a highly competitive, ambiguous, unstable, and alienating space. Thus, the hustleconomy itself is a quandary they must contend with. Participant H stated that "there's definitely a lot of competition which heightens my anxiety because of all the pressure. I feel like I must always bring my A game or I will sink."

Participant B shared that "this whole social media and hustle thing yeah yeah it's just all glitter and glamour you know, the whole influencer lifestyle like it's all smoke and mirrors. People think we are living the life but it is all fake and we actually feel alienated in a fake space that is so competitive and mean. I find myself struggling with my ego, anxiety. I have to deal with my comparative mindset and self-depreciation because of the pressure and all the competition. All this drama and to top it off you know the money is not always stable."

Thus, the theme of the hustle environment and the mind intersects because the intensity of the challenges experienced engaging in the hustleconomy triggers the external impact on the mind of the influencer hustlers.

*Knowledge.* Access to knowledge is a major issue for seven of the participants. Access to knowledge was described as "the know how" by Participant E. Participants discussed that access to good information was a major barrier. Participants shared that although they are educated with some having graduate degrees, the formal education system does not teach students how to engage in hustlenomics and operate within the hustleconomy. Hence, they have to quickly learn how to operate within an economy that is fast paced, competitive, and tempestuous. Indeed,

participants revealed that although there is copious amount of other influencers that share information on YouTube and other social media platforms, the information provided often is shallow, conflicting, and false.

Participant E explains that “I had to invest time and money to learn, so I think for me coming into the hustle economy world, one of the biggest challenges was getting the know-how.” Participant J also describes the challenge of lacking access to knowledge as “I didn’t know what I was doing when I started. I watched videos. I went on YouTube and on Twitter and Instagram. I read, learn from other people, but really it was just trial and error, the info out there is confusing and conflicting. I didn’t have the knowledge. There isn't no one secret, there was no one, you know game changing thing that did this or did that it was just confusing.”

*Technical.* There are technical aspects to being an influencer hustler and thus 4 out of the 12 influencer hustlers interviewed found this to be a challenge they must contend with. They identified the learning curve of content creation and platform management to be challenges they confront but the most significant technical obstacle identified by all four was the algorithms of the platform. Participant K explained that “I am not a techie I don’t have the skills on how to edit and which camera to use or even how to use it. There is so many videos on this stuff everyone is saying different stuff Jesus I struggled learning how to create content and all the mechanics of managing the platform in the beginning. Thank God now for my team”

Participant E elucidated that “people are dependent on the algorithms working in their favor and therefore sometimes people are even pushed to continue to create content they don't necessarily enjoy because they know that that's what's going to satisfy the algorithm and shifting away from that may cause them to be penalized by the algorithm.”

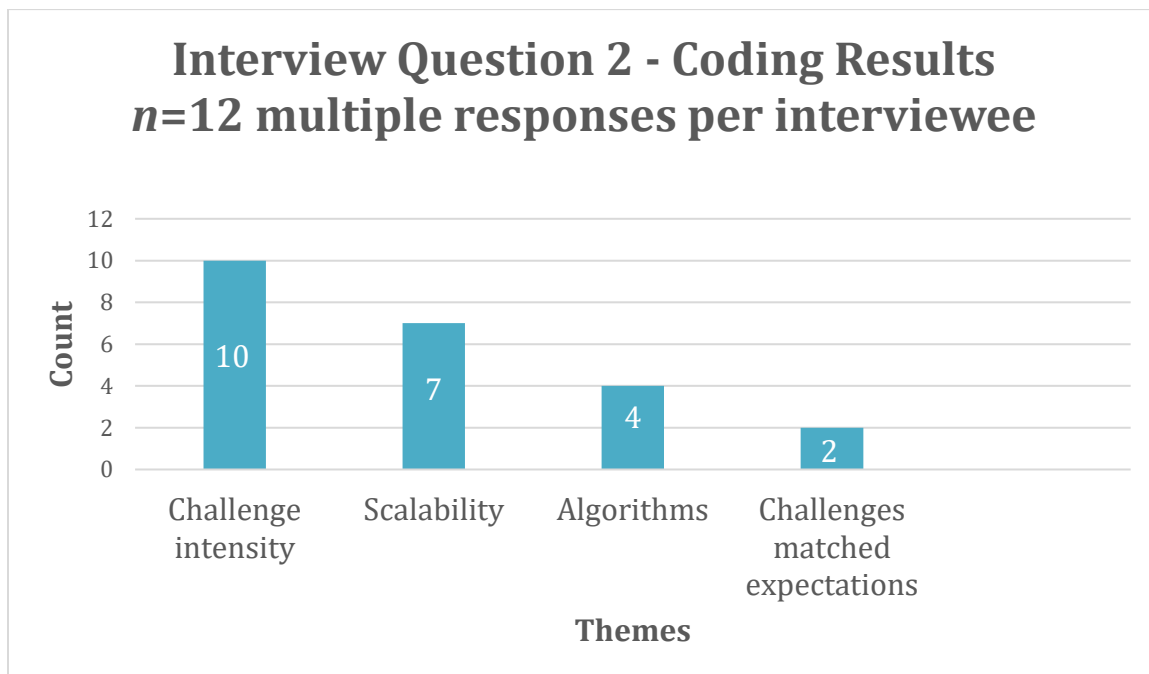
Participant A shared that “the challenge for me is the algorithm it doesn't make any sense

so basically the way it works for us is insane. Two weeks of the month, they let our content go like we get tons and tons of views and for whatever reason, then, for two weeks we get maybe 5 to 10% of our audience viewing our content we don't know why nobody's figured out why. So, it's really difficult running a business you almost aren't in control of.”

### ***Interview Question 2***

Were there challenges that you expected and those that were unexpected? After the data analysis for IQ 2 was completed, a total of 23 replies were produced, with four themes emerging from the data. The following were the four themes that emerged: (a) Challenge intensity, (b) Scalability, (c) Algorithms, and (d) Challenges matched expectations. Figure 2 shows the frequency graph that depicts the four emergent themes from the IQ 2 responses. The figures represent the number of times the theme featured in the responses.

Figure 2. Interview Question 2



*Intensity of challenges.* Ten participants stated that although they expected some level of intensity when it comes to the challenges that comes up while engaged in hustlenomics, they were not expecting the level of intensity of the obstacles. Furthermore, participants also explained that the intensity of the challenges increases with time. However, participants also shared that over time they learned to maneuver through the challenges of being an influencer operating within the hustleconomy because they acquired over time the skills and experience to do so.

Participant I said, “the bigger I get, the more problems I have.” Participant L stated that “everyone made hustle to seem easy but I don't think I expected to be easy, I'm realistic. I didn't expect to become you know the next star or super rich or anything like that. But then I didn't expect it to be that difficult either. I mean there is always issues from algorithms to followers' drama to money issues my head is always fighting.”

Participant C explained that “I always expect challenges, and I think they just grow so I'm getting better because I have better tools that help me to deal with that. I got smarter and I'm able to avoid the pitfalls. But you know also, I will say, at the same time, the longer I hustle, I get the bigger problems. So, the challenges are more intense but I'm just a little bit better prepared for them because of my experience.”

*Scalability.* The theme of scalability highlights the challenges faced when trying to grow or scale the hustle. Seven out of the 12 participants of the study found scalability to be a major impediment that they did not expect that they encounter while engaged in hustlenomics.

Participant J stated that “You know I had some followers and it was not an overnight sensation so it took a lot of consistent posting and work every single day with very little reward but always saying to myself, like, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this. It is always so hard to grow and

scale. Initially it was just getting early adopters trying to get some friends and family to follow me that was the biggest challenge of like getting your first hundred followers then it was getting your first thousand then it was getting to 10K now that I am at 28k it is how do I grow to 50K.”

The theme of scalability is a challenge that intercepts with the theme of knowledge from IQ 1. This is because all seven participants that shared that scalability is a challenge for them highlighted that it is a quandary because they lack the knowledge on how to grow. Furthermore, scaling from each level is different and requires distinctive strategies to scale and grow.

Participant E shared that “you'd see people who got started and they'll tell you within a year, I had 100K subscribers and my life changed and you start doing the same thing and it's not happening for you and you just wonder what I am doing wrong. Scaling and growing platforms is different. The way to grow on YouTube is different from Tik Tok and to make matters worse to scale a platform with 5k followers is different from how to grow from 10k. It takes time and you know you have to know how to do it.”

*Algorithms.* Similar to IQ 1, algorithms were identified as a challenge influencer hustlers have to contend with in hustlenomics. Four out of the 12 participants mentioned that struggling with the various social media algorithms was a challenge that they did not expect. Participant A stated that “a really unexpected challenge that I didn't understand was how YouTube, Instagram, and specifically now Tik Tok algorithms actually shut you down and don't show your content to your followers if you don't pay for that. So, it's really, really, really challenging in the beginning, when you know you have to make that decision, like am I going to pay for this or not ultimately, I decided not to pay to have my content shown, and it was the right decision, but that was a really hard and unanticipated.”

Participant L explained that “you know, especially on social media sometimes you are

subject to the algorithms so you know you may be subject to YouTube algorithms or Instagram or LinkedIn algorithms and so you may create a really stellar piece of content and you may be distributing as much as you can but we're also kinda dependent on these platforms, especially for organic reach I did not expect all of this.”

*Challenges matched expectations.* Two of the participants felt that the anticipated challenges experienced as an influencer operating in the hustle economy matched the actual lived challenges experienced. Participant J stated that “I have been hustling all my life. I feel like I put more pressure on myself than I do, the outside world, so I know challenges are going to come anyways. A lot of it doesn't faze me even though I struggle with doubt and the imposter. I am a hustler and that’s what I do. There is always trouble, it is the life we live, we swim with piranhas and walk in the trenches to make our paper, so yes I expected trouble and the challenges matched my expectations.”

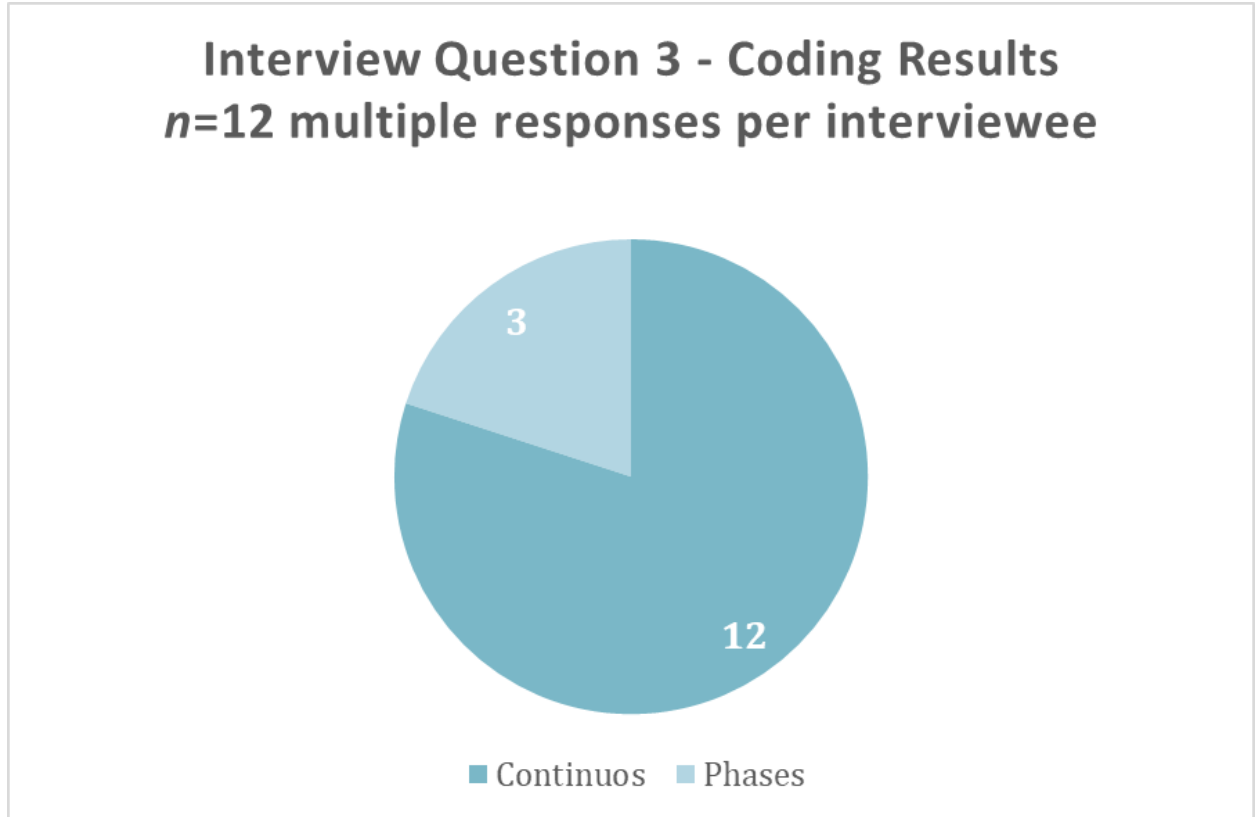
Thusly, the challenges matched the two participants expectations not because the obstacles were not intense but because the participants are long time hustlers and thus are accustomed to experiencing intense challenges while operating in hustlenomics.

### ***Interview Question 3***

Do these challenges come in phases? Only two themes emerged for IQ 3. This is due to the fact that participants shared that there were only two options in terms to the frequency of the challenges - continuous and in phases. 15 responses were derived from IQ 3. All 12 participants stated that the difficulties they endure were continuous conundrums whereas three of the participants also revealed that some of the quandaries they confront do come in phases while operating in hustlenomics. Figure 3 shows the two themes that was discovered from IQ 3 responses are illustrated in the chart.



Figure 3. Interview Question 3



*Continuos.* All the participants of the study acknowledged that there are continuous challenges that influencer hustlers must incessantly grapple with while functioning within hustlenomics. Quandaries pertaining to the mind, money, and the quest and effort to achieve what each participant deems is success is an unrelenting challenge that influencer hustlers must constantly deal with. Participant F explained that “even though I make you know okay money, compared to most people, I still feel like I’m probably at only 10% of what I should be. This thought is always in my head. The mental challenge is always there. The disappointment, the fear, the doubt is always there. I am always fighting to make it.”

*Phases.* Three participants shared that some of the challenges they confront in hustlenomics come in phases. The obstacles that come in phases were identified as challenges

that comes with growth or the initiation of a new project or venture. Participant A stated that “some of the challenges have come in phases, but they're not any different than they were in the beginning. Today it's still about getting as many eyes on your content, as you can see that's no different but when it is time to scale my platform or if I am starting or transitioning one of my business ventures then I have to deal with new issues.... so, you can say you know new growth new problems.” Likewise, according to Participant C, “project wise it's different right. The problems come in phases...I've operated for the past 15 years on so many different projects, I would say there are phases to hustles the beginning and when it is time to move to the next level you know scale it's a whole other set of problems. There is always need for capital, new rules to learn.”

### **Summary of RQ1.**

The primary objective of RQ 1 is to identify the frequently experienced adversities and roadblocks that influencer hustlers confront in their quest for success in hustlenomics. By examining the responses, perspectives, and insights shared by the participants during the study, an aggregate of 11 themes emerged. The themes that were discovered were: (a) Mind, (b) Money, (c) Hustle environment, (d) Knowledge, (e) Technical, (f) Intensity of challenges, (g) Scalability, (h) Algorithms, (i) Challenges met expectations, (J) Continuous challenges, and (K) Phases challenges.

The participants deemed the mind, money, and the hustle environment as an incessant barrier and predicament that they have to struggle with; while quandaries pertaining to scalability and growth were challenges that materialize in phases. Although the themes were identified as individual concepts, they are also linked to each other. For example, the mind and the hustle environment are two separate themes, however, they are connected because the competitive and

daunting environment of the hustleconomy provides the external triggers to the influencer's mind that exacerbates issues pertaining to frustration and disappointment. Similarly, technical challenges are connected to algorithm barriers because the biggest technical challenge identified by the participants is the social media platform algorithms.

### **Research Question 2**

RQ 2: What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers that are engaged in Hustlenomics? While RQ 1 with its analogous interview questions IQ 1 through IQ 3 unearthed the challenges and barriers to success that influencer hustlers face while engaged in hustlenomics, RQ 2 and its corresponding interview questions IQ 4 through IQ 8 provide the solutions the participants employ to tackle the obstacles. Hence, the purpose of RQ2 and its analogous interview questions is to discover from the participants' responses, insights, and perspectives the tools, tactics, and strategies that has enabled them to attain success in hustlenomics. As a result, the second research question was accompanied by the following five interview questions:

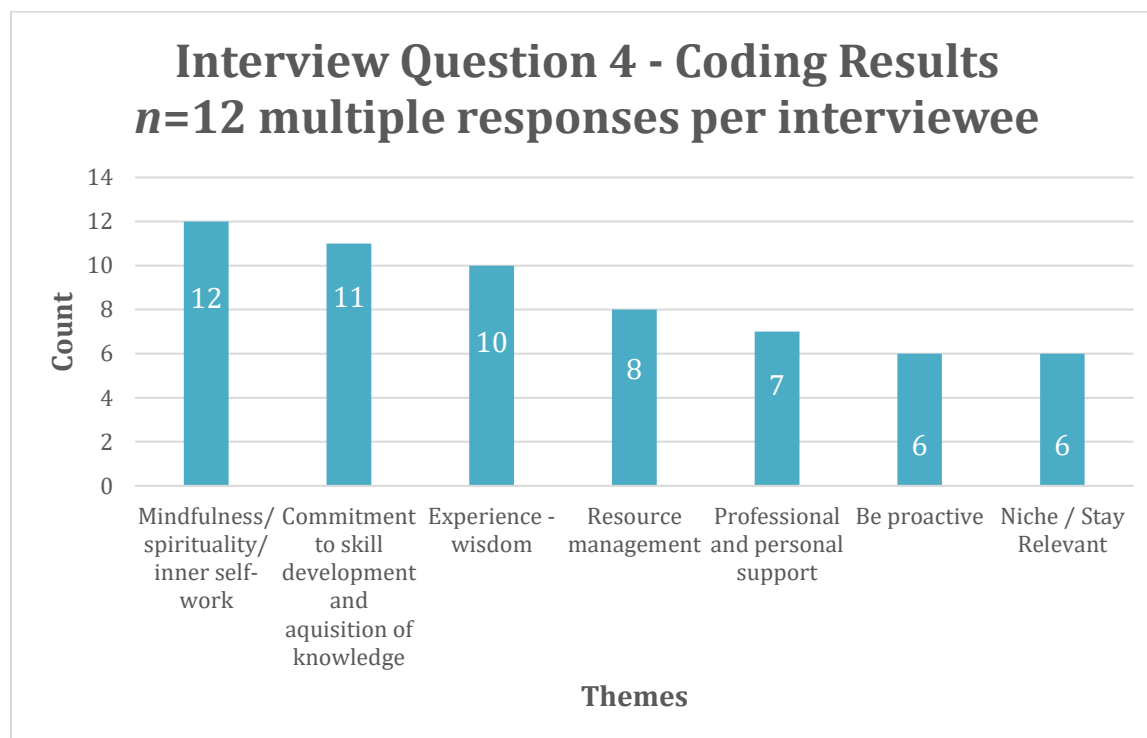
- IQ 4: How did you conquer your most difficult challenges?
- IQ5: How did you overcome your day to day challenges
- IQ6: What resources did you have available to you or sought?
- IQ 7: How do you stay motivated in the midst of these difficulties?
- IQ8: What personal characteristics do you have that greatly contributed to your success?

### ***Interview Question 4***

How did you conquer your most difficult challenges? 60 responses were gathered from to participants for IQ 4. From those 60 responses, 7 themes were unearthed. The 7 strategies that was shared by the participants highlights the different strategies they have access to that they

employ depending on the issue that they are confronting. The themes discovered for IQ 4 were as follows: (a) Mindfulness/ spirituality/ inner self-work, (b) Commitment to skill development and acquisition of knowledge, (c) Experience - wisdom, (d) Resource management, (e) Profession and personal support, (f) Be proactive, (g) Stay relevant / know niche. Figure 4 is the frequency graph that depicts the findings of the IQ 4 coding analysis.

Figure 4. Interview Question 4



*Mindfulness/ spirituality/ self-work.* The participants regarded the mind as the most significant barrier to achievement. As a result, all 12 participants shared that practicing mindfulness, spirituality, and self-work is imperative for overcoming this quandary. The participants revealed that this strategy is an efficient and effective approach for dealing with their internal battles and external triggers that have an impact on their mind. Hence, as per Participant C “meditation and manifestation exercises are super important. Like they have just given me this confidence that if I want it, I can get it yeah. So, yeah it helps put the imposter in check.”

*Commitment to skill development and acquisition of knowledge.* 11 participants shared that committing to skill development and acquisition of knowledge is very vital to the success of an influencer hustler. This is due to the fact that as per the participants, one must be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to be relevant, capable, and competitive in the hustleconomy. Therefore, according to the participants, it is very important for hustlers that want to be successful to allocate the resources and invest in their continuous learning and self-improvement. Participant E suggests that hustlers should “invest more in learning. I am always reading, watching YouTube videos and listening to podcast. I pay a coach to tell me everything like from top to bottom, how did you do this, how did you build this empire.” Participant K shared that “I do believe in the fact that you can learn anything, and you can make something out of that so I am always looking for ways to learn and improve myself and my hustle.”

*Experience- wisdom.* Ten participants revealed that their acquired experience and wisdom has been a fundamental key to their success. As per Participant L, “experience is the best teacher.” According to Participant J wisdom and experience serve as a best practice database. This is due to the fact as per Participant J, they have endured many circumstances and situations while operating in the hustleconomy and thus their experience and the lessons they have learned during their journey serve as a point of reference that they can tap into and learn from which intrinsically guides them. Participant C states that “the wisdom that comes from doing this for so long and the experience is, I think one of the biggest things. If what happens to me now as I hustle was happening to me in my 20s, I would have just been like, I’m done, I can't take it, I can't do it, but now you know I have so much more strength, wisdom because of my experience.”

*Resource management.* Eight participants shared that resource management is vital to the success of any hustler. All of the 8 hustlers considered money and time to be the most important resources a hustler needs for success. Hustlers typically operate multiple business and ventures; thus, they are busy with limited time. Furthermore, due to the unstable and insecure nature of money for hustlers, the participants mentioned the importance of managing money. In terms of managing money, some suggestions shared by the participants were maintaining a solid rainy day fund or savings account, make sure all bills are paid, and investing in multiple businesses and oneself.

Participant J shared how precious time was and that there is only 24 hours in a day but they need more than that to operate their businesses. Thus, to be productive and successful according to Participant J, a hustler must be impeccable at managing time and money. Participant H stated that “so with the time thing you know I just try to create pockets of time, where I can do my work. With the money situation you know I first try to stack up money cause men you never know, then I take care of my bills at home and then you know, whatever is left over, I can use some of that to invest in myself, and in my business.”

*Professional and personal support.* Seven people said that having a strong support system is critical to their success. Personal and professional support systems were identified by the participants as two categories of support networks. Personal support was defined as family, friends, and personal mentors. Participants shared how their personal support system are a source of encouragement and motivation and thus, they keep them grounded, invigorated, and inspired. Participant K shared that their personal support serves as their foundation and cheer team, when they no longer feel like they can do it, their personal support systems help them see why they hustle and inspire them to keep pushing.

The participants considered a team, a virtual assistant for those who cannot afford a complete team, and professional mentors to be professional support. These groups of people serve as support because participants believe they help with getting things done and bringing in the resources such as capital that are deemed essential. According to Participant E “getting a virtual assistant was a huge leap, but then I also saw the benefit of the things she was taking off my plate. Since I have been using her, I’m winning I have more time and I am making more money.” Mentors are considered to be vital because they attain wisdom, know-how, and access to networks. Participant J claimed that mentors can open doors, they have connections and can help gain access to opportunities and capital that they could not attain on their own. Participant J goes on to explain that mentors are elders in the game that know a lot and can direct them in the right direction to success.

*Be proactive.* Six participants shared that it is very important for hustlers to be proactive. Being proactive was described as the ability to make a decision and move or act when needed. The biggest obstacle participants revealed is the mind. Hence, the battles in the mind were disclosed to hold many participants hostage to fear, doubt, frustration etc. This struggle participants explained can easily cause a hustler to be crippled by mental quandaries and thus unable to take action on a hustle, venture or make decisions. However, as participant J puts it, “our world is fast paced, no one will wait for you to deal with your issues you have to know how to handle those demons and move, you know they say the only way to kill fear is to be proactive.” Thus, for a hustler to be successful in hustlenomics, they must attain the capability to make quick decisions and act in spite of their mental struggles.

Furthermore, it was also mentioned that, in addition to being able to make a decision or act on a business initiative, hustlers must also be able to make the decision or take the action to

discontinue a business or venture. Participant F stated that “sometimes people will pursue things much longer than what they should, sometimes people fall in love with an idea or a venture they created. Sometimes the idea or venture is a bad idea but they keep pursuing it because they believe in it but the market doesn’t and the venture just sucks up money with no productivity. As hustler we must know when to count your losses and take the action to end things.”

*Niche - stay relevant.* Six participants responded that an influencer hustler's ability to know themselves, discover their niche, and stay relevant is critical to their success. As a result, the topic of recognizing oneself and capacity, identifying the niche and market to whom one's platform attracts, and being relevant by satisfying the demands of the discovered niche was said to be critical to the success of an influencer hustler. Participant E stated that “I had to find out who I am and what I can offer you know. Then I found markets to serve that want what I have. This was really pivotal and now I just create for them. It doesn't matter what the algorithm does right I just create for that market segment. That’s how I build my tribe. I make videos on YouTube and share it on my LinkedIn, Instagram and my site where my tribe will see it.” Participant A also shared that “I basically figured out my niche and what people wanted to see and it took a lot of time and a lot of trial and error and try a million different things and figuring out like okay how am I different than others, and what makes me unique what makes me different and special.”

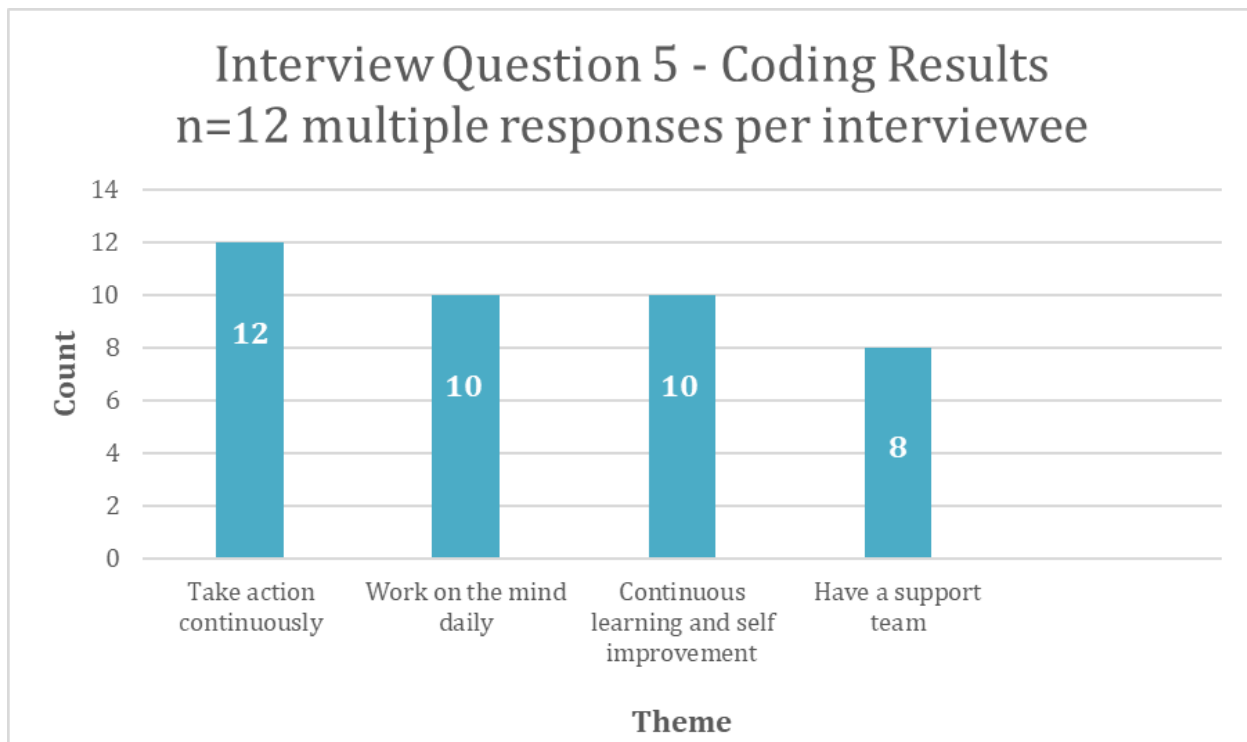
### ***Interview Question 5***

How did you overcome your day to day challenges? After identifying many tactics in IQ 4 for overcoming difficulties in hustlenomics and achieving success, IQ 5 focuses on the participants' day-to-day strategies for addressing their challenges and achieving success. 40 responses were attained to IQ 5 with four themes surfacing from the data. The themes identified were: (a) Take



action continuously, (b) Work on the mind daily, (c) Continuous learning and self-improvement, and (d) have a support team. The chart in figure 5 illustrates the four themes for IQ 5 that emerged from the data analysis process.

Figure 5. Interview Question 5



*Take action continuously.* All of the study's 12 participants disclosed that in order for an influencer hustler to be successful, they must take action on a daily basis to address their issues and work toward success. From the responses of the participants, it was gathered that the hustleconomy's environment is highly competitive and overly saturated thus in order to stay competitive and relevant, regardless of the challenges, a hustler must hustle and take action on a daily basis.

Participant J talked about "daily hitting the streets to make his paper" which translates to getting out daily to earn money. Participant K claims that due to the fast pace of the

hustleconomy, a true hustler must constantly move, and take action on every opportunity that cross their path that is profitable. Participant H shared that “as an influencer, I just try to maintain consistency, and again I look at everything online what people and brands are doing like you have to always hustle, don’t just sit there, you have to move. Just to understand the scope of each platform and what people are looking at and then yeah I guess just trying not to give up but always move and deliver.”

*Work on the mind.* Implementing daily activities that helps resolve and manage the day-to-day mental struggles of engaging in hustlenomics is vital according to the participants of the study. Thus, participants shared they engage in exercises that help heal and strengthen the mind such as meditation, prayer, journaling, affirmations, releasing emotions, rest, exercise, and counseling in order to endure the stresses that comes with hustling. Participant B shared that “I just view journaling is just such an excellent way to do that, because my mind races, I need it to be clear and the only way I can clear it out, is by dumping it somewhere that is sacred to me, you know and so journaling has been really helpful. Participant E also stated that “everybody's going through something hard you know and it's Okay, you know, you can cry, you can get counseling, counseling is very important. You get what you need to get but you keep on moving you know.

*Continuous learning and self-improvement.* The participants highlighted a lack of access to knowledge and know-how of engaging in hustlenomics and functioning inside the hustleconomy as an enormous conundrum. Accordingly, an effective way to achieve success, overcome the hurdles they face as they hustle, and to stay competitive, improve, and grow, ten of the participants reported that they work on enhancing themselves on a daily basis by incessantly learning and developing skills. As a result, participants mentioned engaging in everyday activities such as reading, watching informative videos on YouTube, practicing their craft,

following trends on multiple platforms such as Instagram and Tic Tok, and hiring a coach to help them achieve their goals. Participant I for instance shared “I sharpen my saw every day. I practice my craft. I watch YouTube to see and learn what others are doing.” Participant K stated that “I am always trying to educate myself you know. I invest in books, so I have kindle unlimited and I have subscription so I listen to audiobooks while I work, I do this so that I could understand.... I've paid for in person coaching because they know this business, they can teach me more in one day than any school.”

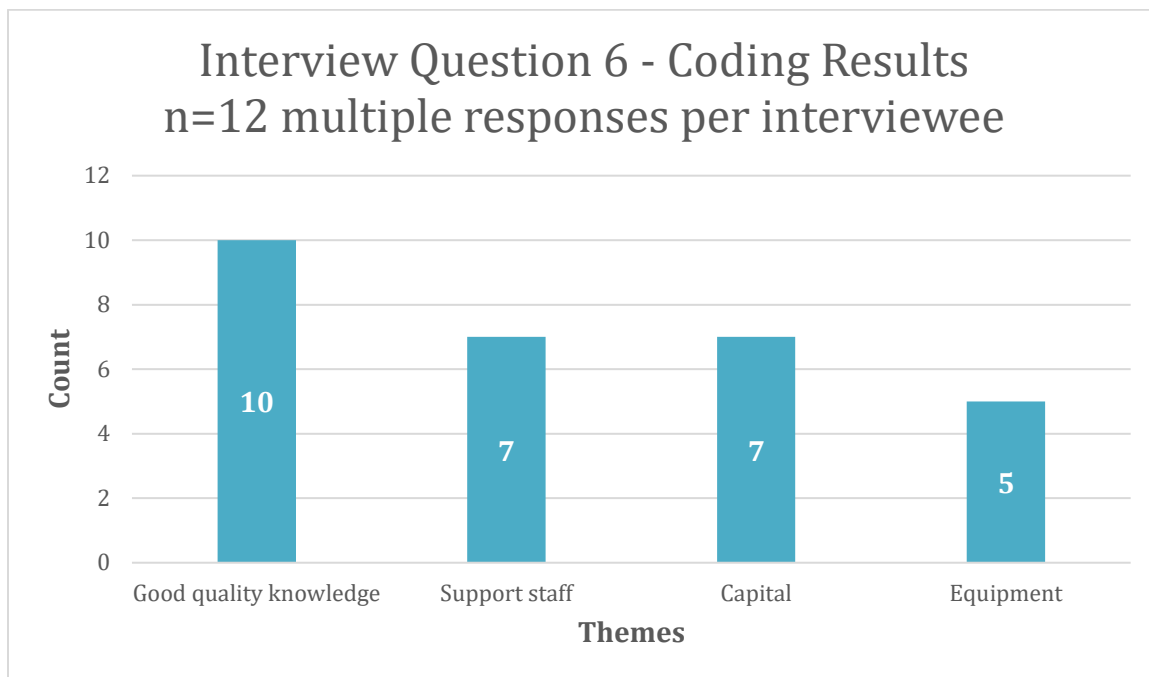
*Have a support team.* 8 participants said that having access to a support team is critical to being effective on a daily basis. This is due to the fact that hustlers are exceedingly busy individuals that operate multiple businesses, ventures, and gigs. Hence, having a support team is essential to their success. Participant E stated that “I find it's really, really important to have somebody to support just because, like we were talking about earlier there's only so much time I have, in a day.” The support staff, according to the participants, is significant because they are specialists in their professions and thus are not only efficient and proficient at carrying out their work, but they also give the hustler the time and space to undertake the high-level duties, as a result permitting the hustler to be more efficient. Furthermore, the participants stated that building a team takes time because of the cost, thus it is advisable to begin contracting out tasks with a virtual assistant at first. According to the participants, a virtual assistant is affordable, especially when hired from places like the Philippines.

### ***Interview Question 6***

What resources did you have available to you or sought? A total of 29 responses were garnered for IQ 6. From the derived responses, four themes were generated which were: (a) Good quality

knowledge, (b) Support staff, (c) Capital, and (d) Equipment. The chart in figure 6 illustrates the four themes for IQ 6 that emerged from the data analysis process.

Figure 6. Interview Question 6



*Good quality knowledge:* Access to high-quality knowledge, according to ten participants, is a critical resource that influencers require to be effective. The participants are looking for high-quality information that will help them better their hustle. However, according to the participants, there is a lot of material being shared on social media sites like YouTube, and a lot of it contradicts each other and may be quite confusing. As a result, the participants have shown a significant demand for access to high-quality knowledge from experts and those who have successfully navigated the hustling life. Paying coaches, according to participant E, is a good idea since they educate from experience and have previously demonstrated to know how to succeed in hustlenomics.

*Support staff:* A support staff of technical specialists and, at the absolute least, a virtual assistant, according to seven participants, is vital for a successful hustler's efficacy. "Even though

it's just me and my virtual assistant right now, I find it's really, really important to have somebody to support me because I could stay up all night trying to do this, but then I'd go insane, and that's not good for my health or mental health, so having somebody that even helps" said participant K. Hustlers are extremely active individuals who manage numerous enterprises and endeavors while also attempting to maintain a personal and social life. As a result, the respondents acknowledged that having a support staff is critical for productivity and efficacy.

Furthermore, while the participants pride themselves on their expertise, they also admitted that they lack all of the necessary abilities to successfully and efficiently operate and deliver to their followers and clients. As a result, having access to experts with technical knowledge is critical. "On the digital tip, you know, social media side of things, I'm alright with hiring people and partnering with people because I know I don't have the abilities I'm not really grasping the nuts and bolts of it," Participant F explained.

*Capital.* Capital, according to seven participants, is an essential resource for a successful hustler. Both financial assets and human capital — networks and mentors — were defined as capital by the participants. Participants agreed that money and other financial assets are necessary to start and run their businesses. As a result, the participants claimed that they would be unable to function without access to financial capital. This is also why participants feel that having access to human capital is critical. Participants felt that having access to mentors and networks is critical to obtaining financial capital as well as relevant business prospects and guidance. Mentors and networks, according to participants, may point them in the right direction for obtaining financial resources, connecting them with significant business possibilities, and guiding them on their path to success in the hustle economy. As a result, Participant J stated, "It's really key you know to really network with some folks accomplishing some major things. I guess

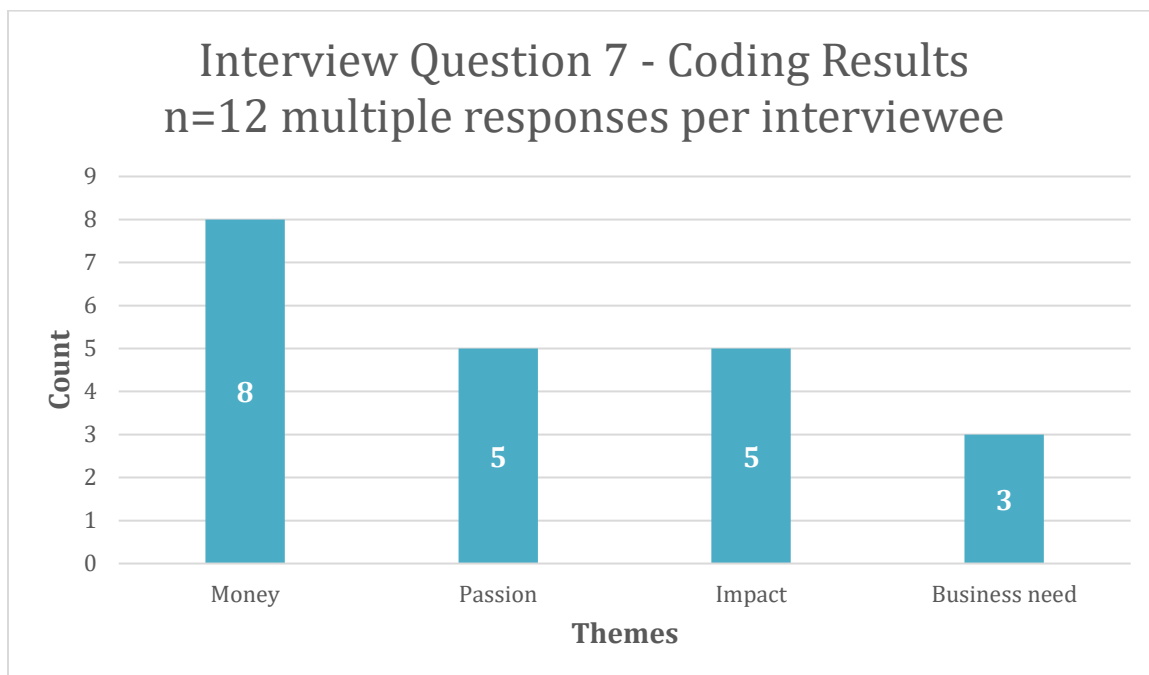
I'd like to meet someone who will take me under their wing at some time. I could simply follow them around all day and ask them questions."

*Equipment:* Five participants considered software and equipment such as cameras to be essential tools. Participant B and Participant I both agreed that equipment is a valuable asset in their hustle. "I produce films," said Participant B, "and I absolutely needed to get cameras, and I needed to invest in that." Every entrepreneurial effort, according to the participants, requires some form of equipment, which is typically costly. Furthermore, it is critical to understand what equipment is required and when it is necessitated. Many individuals new to the influencer industry are perplexed, according to the participants, because there are so many videos on sites like YouTube advising them to invest in expensive equipment like cameras, lights, sound etc. while others advise them to use their phone. Thus, an influencer has to know what equipment to acquire, when to get it, and how to utilize it.

### ***Interview Question 7***

How do you stay motivated in the midst of these difficulties? This question helps in appreciating what drives and encourages hustles despite the adversity and quandaries they confront in hustlenomics. For IQ 7, a totally of 21 responses were amassed with four themes emerging from the data. The themes that were generated were: (a) Money; (b) Passion; (c) Impact; (d) Business need. Figure 7 is the frequency graph demonstrates the four themes for IQ 7.

Figure 7. Interview Question 7



*Money.* Money is the top motivator for eight participants when it comes to working in the hustleconomy and weathering the challenges that come with it. As a result, Participant G admitted, "if I'm being honest, I'm really motivated by money." Participants said they look for financial comfort and freedom in hustlenomics. Although the hustleconomy is a difficult environment to operate in, participants believe that it provides them with options to earn money on their own terms as they strive for financial security and independence.

*Passion.* Five participants mentioned that they participate in hustlenomics and thus tolerate the hurdles because it allows them to explore and share their passion. This is especially true of the entertainer-type influencers that took part in this study. "I'm talented and people like what I do, so it's the best of both worlds," said Participant B, a videographer and artist. Participant B goes on to say that "hustling and influencing allow me to be myself and enjoy life. There are no limits when it comes to creating...I love it when I get to show other people my work and we rediscover that power inside ourselves." Being an influencer hustler provides artists and

entertainers with a platform to express their craft directly with their fans and receive immediate feedback. As a result, the hustleconomy is a valuable arena for influencer entertainers to discover and express their interest, according to the participants in this study.

However, entertainers were not the only ones who use their passion to influence others. "I am extremely excited about this work as an influencer because I get to interact with followers, they are like my family, my friends, so I cannot disconnect with them, that is why I will simply continue to share and inspire them" said participant D. Some of the participants stated that they are enthusiastic about their subject matter, and that being an influencer hustler allows them to share their love with their audience. As a result, they persevere despite the hurdles that come with participating in hustlenomics and working within the hustleconomy since it allows them to communicate what they are passionate about.

*Impact.* Similar to the theme of passion, five participants stated that they endure the challenges of the hustleconomy because it gives them the space to be impactful. Participant E shared that "I think one of the biggest motivations is ultimately helping people and getting those messages as a thank you. You know like I feel like that's so impactful that's why I do this." This group of influencers work hard because they want to reach their target audience and deliver their content, which could include information that benefits their followers' livelihoods, information that inspires their audience, sharing resources, and even knowledge of how they got to where they are now. As a result, they persevere through the tribulations of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy in order to make a difference in the lives of their followers.

*Business need.* Three individuals mentioned that their other business enterprises motivated them to become influencers. Participants admitted to being influencers who use social media platforms as brand ambassadors for their other businesses. "I am the marketing

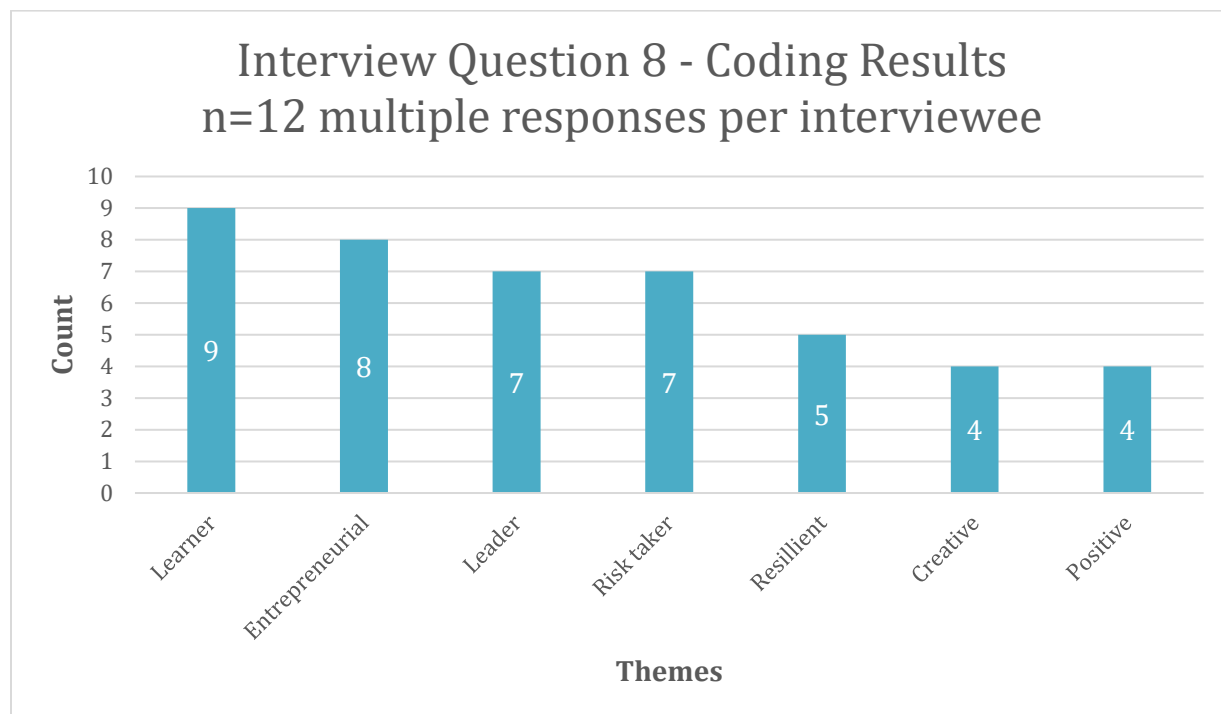


department for my businesses," said participant J. Participants mentioned that they need to advertise and promote their businesses and products to their target audience, and that as an influencer, they can easily reach and engage with customers. "We hired influencers in the beginning to talk about our product and it failed. We didn't get much of a return on our investment, so [influencing] was virtually forced on us. I didn't do it because I enjoyed, I don't really enjoy it at all actually, it's a lot of work and not enjoyable dealing with mean people on the Internet, but I do it out of necessity" said participant A.

### ***Interview Question 8***

What personal characteristics do you have that greatly contributed to your success? The purpose of this question is to collect a list of attributes that effective hustlers deem essential for success in hustlenomics when operating in the hustleconomy. Thus, these attributes are a list of characteristics that the participants deem vital for an effective hustler. Accordingly, for IQ 8, 44 responses were collected. Upon the completion of the data analysis, 7 attributes and themes were garnered. The themes include: (a) Learner, (b) Entrepreneurial, (c) Leader, (d) Risk taker, (e) Resilient, (f) Creative, and (g) Positive. Figure 8 is the graph that depicts the seven themes that arose from the data analysis process for IQ 8.

Figure 8. Interview Question 8



*Learner.* Nine of the participants said that the ability to always learn and grow is critical to becoming a great hustler. Participant F stated that “I’m willing to put the time and money in to learn. In this business you must always learn.” Since the hustleconomy is a fast-paced, highly competitive environment, participants indicated that in order to be effective, hustlers must constantly study and seek to improve their skills. Hustlers must also be willing to spend money in order to learn and improve, according to the participants. This is because, as per the participants, not all free material is of high quality, thus hustlers must be discerning about where they get their information and be willing to pay for high-quality knowledge and skill development.

*Entrepreneurial.* As a hustler, eight participants agreed that it is critical to be entrepreneurial. This is due to the fact as per the participants, in order to make a living as a hustler, one must always be willing to explore any business opportunity that is feasible. Furthermore, the interviewees claimed that hustlers must operate many gigs due to the

uncertainty and fragility of the hustleconomy. Thus, according to the participants, to attain financial comfort and independence, a hustler must be entrepreneurial. Participant C shared “I cannot leave money on the table. I am always looking at every business prospect. I tell my VA (virtual assistant) that every email is money and we have to go after all of them like a stripper going after every dollar at the strip club.”

Furthermore, participants stated that being a hustler is a calling that they were born with. As a result, the hustle economy provides space for those who are predisposed to be entrepreneurs to exercise their inherent aptitude. As a result, Participant J stated that “I’m enterprising I think I have an entrepreneurial streak for sure. Otherwise, I wouldn't be pursuing all these things enjoy the thrill of starting something and seeing how it grows and I think that's what an entrepreneur is and enterprise somebody starting something new, so I love that.”

*Leader.* A successful influencer leader, according to seven participants of this study, requires the ability to lead. Participants explained that an influencer hustler not only leads their team but also their followers. Thus, participants underlined the importance of developing strong leadership abilities in order to be effective as influencer hustlers. As Participant L puts it, “Afterall I have followers, I have over 150K of them, I have to be a great leader for them to continue following me and I also have to have strong leadership skills to lead my team.” Likewise, Participant J shared that “I also think my ability to coordinate, delegate, and be a leader is also like prime. Especially since I have multiple businesses, I have a lot of folks depending on me.”

*Risk taker.* The ability to take calculated risk was considered an invaluable asset in order to be successful by seven participants of the study. Participant A shared that “The willingness to fail, by far is the one thing for me. I calculate my risk and I am willing to fail. You have to take

risks in our work or you won't make it." According to the participants, the ability to gauge risk and proceed is vital. This is due to the fact that as per the participants, the hustleconomy is a highly volatile sector; hence, a hustler must develop the aptitude to quantify risk, determine whether the opportunity given provides advantages that justify the risk, and then move.

Participant H claims that "I cannot be crippled by the fear of risk we just take it and see where it lands me"

*Resilient.* Five participants stated that resilience is an aptitude required of an effective hustler. Participant I defined resilience to be "the mental strength to deal with the day-to-day stresses of hustling." Thus, as per the participants, anyone that wants to be successful and effective in hustlenomics must attain the mental strength and resilience to survive. This is largely due to the fact that the hustleconomy is a very difficult economic arena and it is not for the faint of heart according to the participants. Hence, Participant E stated that "I enjoy the fact that as I'm growing older very few things faze me anymore so even you know different challenges have come my way, I've had to take down my most watched video, and it was heart wrenching but I continued." Participant L also shared that "I'm resilient. Even with all the troubles and stress. It doesn't mean I don't cry or question why this is happening to me, but I've recognized that over time, I've developed the emotional intelligence and resilience to be able to look at a terrible situation and say, yes, this is painful, but it's ok."

*Creative.* Four participants stated that a hustler must be creative in order to succeed in hustlenomics. According to the participants, the ability to think outside the box is the definition of creativity. The hustleconomy, according to the participants, is an overly saturated and extremely competitive market; so, being innovative and unconventional makes the hustler unique. To put it another way, "you have to stand out," said Participant I. As a result, being

innovative and unorthodox allows the hustler to be one-of-a-kind, to give something that no one else can, and this, according to the participants, leads to success. For instance, Participant B shared that “the way my mind thinks and the way it just thinks outside of the box doesn't make sense and sometimes I’m just like all right, this is interestingly risky but then you know this is why my followers like me.”

*Positive.* According to four participants, staying positive and optimistic is a fundamental to success in hustlenomics. According to the participants, this is because the hustleconomy is a high-stress environment that might adversely affect the hustler's mind. As a result, the participants concurred that attaining the capability to let go of the negativity that comes with the daily grind of hustling is crucial to success. As per the participants, letting go of negativity not only facilitates the process of calming the hustler's mind, but it also allows the hustler to see things from a positive perspective, which is equally important in being productive. Participant C stated that “God gave me a gift and I’m a pretty positive optimistic person and I’m very, very grateful for that and I think that it helps me to just sort of bounce back keep going.”

## **Summary of RQ 2**

The objective of RQ 2 is to garner the strategies and best practices that the effective influencer hustlers in this study utilize to attain success in hustlenomics. From the five interview questions asked to address RQ 2, a total of 194 responses were collected. From the responses a total of 26 themes were discovered.

Seven themes were identified as general techniques used by effective influencer hustlers to overcome hurdles encountered while engaged in hustlenomics and working in the hustleconomy. The following are the seven themes and strategies: (a) Mindfulness/ spirituality/ inner self-work, (b) Commitment to skill development and acquisition of knowledge, (c)

Experience - wisdom, (d) Resource management, (e) Profession and personal support, (f) Be proactive, (g) Stay relevant/know niche.

In order to succeed in hustlenomics, hustlers must continue to address the obstacles that arise on a regular basis. As a result of the participants' comments, four themes and strategies emerged. The following were the day-to-day strategies and themes identified: (a) Take action continuously, (b) Work on the mind daily, (c) Continuous learning and self-improvement, and (d) have a support team.

The influencer hustlers in this study discussed the resources they desired or have accessible to them in order to be effective. The following four themes emerged from the derived responses: (a) Good quality knowledge, (b) Support staff, (c) Capital, and (d) Equipment.

Since hustlenomics presents numerous difficulties for hustlers, the study's participants expressed what motivates and inspires them in the face of hardship and perplexity. As a result of the participants' comments, four themes emerged. The following were the themes that emerged: (a) Money; (b) Passion; (c) Impact; and (d) Business need.

The study's respondents acknowledged that being a successful hustler necessitates a certain set of personality traits. As a result, a list of characteristics that define an effective hustler was compiled, yielding a total of seven themes and attributes: (a) Learner, (b) Entrepreneurial, (c) Leader, (d) Risk taker, (e) Resilient, (f) Creative, and (g) Positive.

### **Research Question 3**

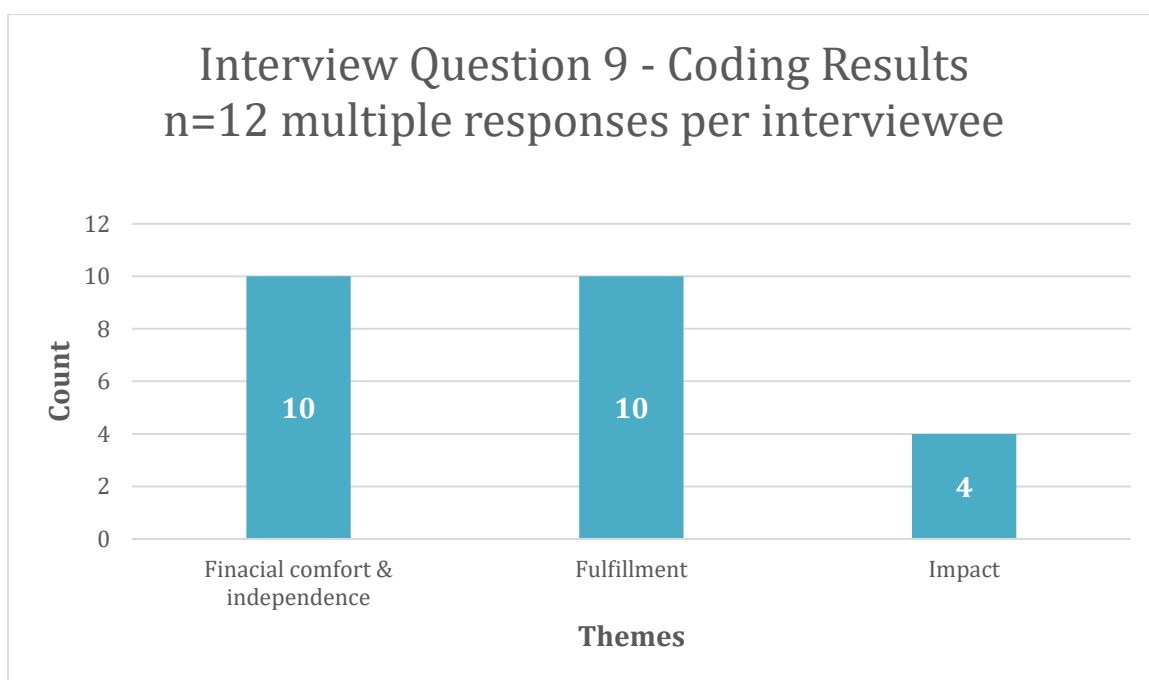
RQ 3: How do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success? RQ 3 was addressed with the following two interview questions:

- IQ 9: How do you define success as a hustler?
- IQ 10: How do you measure and track your success as a hustler?

### *Interview Question 9*

How do you define success as a hustler? The purpose of IQ 9 is to learn from the participants the definition of success as an influencer hustler. Thus, for IQ 9, 24 responses were collected and after the data analysis process, 3 themes emerged. The themes that were garnered include: (a) Financial comfort and independence, (b) Fulfillment, and (c) Impact. Figure 9 is the graph that displays the three main themes that emerged from the responses for IQ 9.

Figure 9. Interview Question 9



*Financial comfort / independence.* The acquisition of financial comfort and independence was regarded by ten participants as success as an influencer hustler. According to the participants, they navigate across the challenging terrain of the hustleconomy because it offers more opportunities and room to generate more money than the formal economic sector. As a result, as per the participants, accumulating financial assets is critical. The participants asserted that when they have acquired enough financial assets to not have to worry about how they will pay their bills or be forced to continue working, then, they have achieved financial success. As a

result, the participants indicated that financial comfort means being able to afford the lifestyle they desire, while financial independence means not having to worry about losing their job or having to work. Thus, Participant C defined success as “secure and comfortable financially” and Participant A explained that “for me success comes from financial independence. First of being able to be financially independent from this business, not having to have another job. Not having to work in another capacity that this pays my bills, that is the easiest and most clear cut of this.”

*Fulfilment.* The ability to live a fulfilled life was characterized by ten participants as success for hustlers. Participant F defined fulfilment as “we don't have long to live. We never know when it's all gonna end on this planet... so, as long as my loved ones and I are fulfilled, as long as we are happy, healthy and then stress free that's success.” The thoughts of the other nine participants who defined success as fulfillment echoed those of Participant F. For instance, Participant B defined success as the ability to live life on one's terms, to attain joy, peace and good health. Participant B further described success to be the ability to follow one's passion and “the peace that comes with being able to wake up when I want and do whatever I want.”

*Impact.* The third theme that emerged from the data analysis process to determine success was impact. The ability to create a positive impact was considered as success by four participants. Impact was defined by the participants as improving the lives and incomes of others. As a result, despite the challenges they face in hustlenomics and the hustleconomy as a whole, those that characterize success as impact endure because they want to reach and assist their followers. As a result, the participants asserted that they develop content, which may include information that enhances their followers' livelihoods, how to access resources, provide encouragement, and even wisdom of how they arrived to where they are now. Participant E explained that “I've had people say oh, thank you because I took your course, I now have my

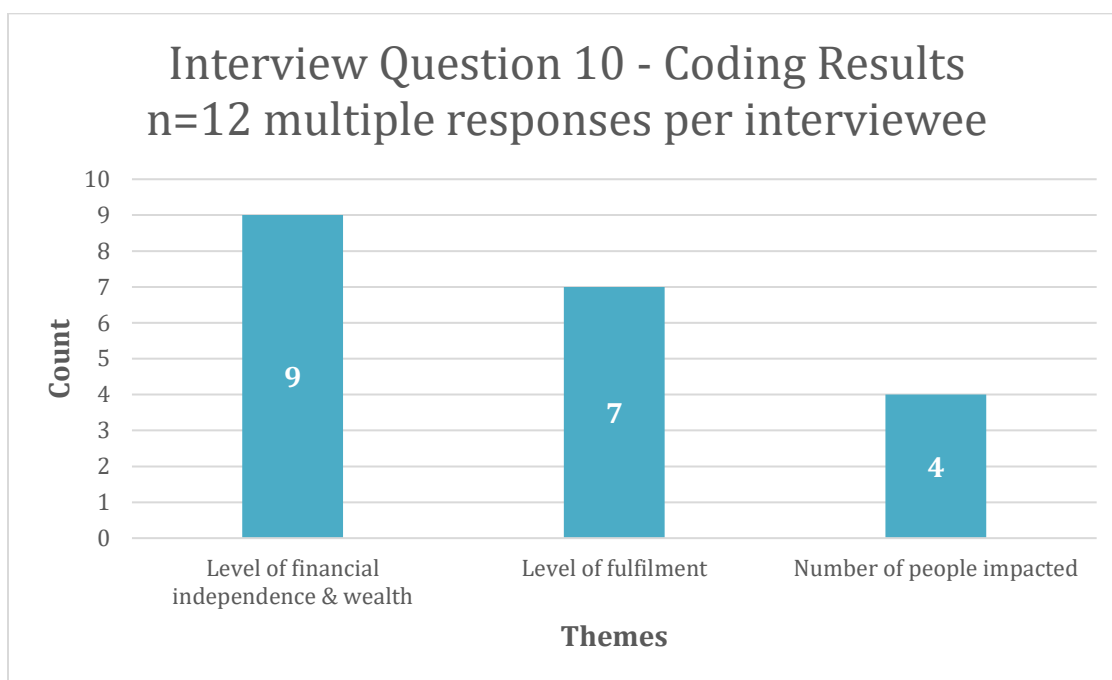


first client or I listened to your podcast and now I didn't think it was possible, but now I have my first client like those things make me successful.

### ***Interview question 10***

How do you measure and track your success as a hustler? A total of 20 responses was attained for IQ 10 with three themes materializing after the data analysis process. The three themes that was discovered were: (a) Level of financial independence and wealth, (b) Level of fulfilment; and (c) Number of people impacted. Figure 10 is the frequency graph that illustrates the three themes of IQ 10.

Figure 10. Interview Question 10



*Level of financial independence and wealth.* Nine of the participants use their financial independence and wealth to measure and track their achievement. Although there is no official process for tracking this or meaningful benchmarks to compare their degree of success to, it remains the standard of measurement for all nine participants who said they track success by their level of financial independence and wealth. Participant C stated that “I don’t know how I

will measure or track this cause I will say I will know when I get there but if I were to measure, I will be measuring how wealthy, comfortable and how independent I am. Participant C's perspective was mirrored by the other eight participants, who define success in terms of financial freedom and riches.

*Fulfillment.* Seven participants use their level of fulfillment as a metric for measuring and tracking their performance. All seven individuals who assess and track success based on their level of fulfillment said they do so on a regular basis, with the majority doing so on a daily basis. The participants said that they feel fulfilled and successful if they live a peaceful, happy existence that gives them the room and freedom to live life on their own terms and do what they want on a daily basis. For instance, Participant F explained that "If I am not stressed. Out of 24 hours of the day let's say of I'm up 16 of those, I measure fulfillment by how many of those 16 hours, I am let's say not really being stressed, I am happy, my folks are good, and no health issues. So, if I can accomplish this 75% of my day then I am rocking it."

*Impact.* Four participants evaluate their success based on the number of individuals they had an impact on. "I judge success by how many individuals reach out to me and say thank you," said participant E. There is no universal rule about how many people are required to be successful; rather, the focus is on making an impact, and that is all that matters. "As long as I help one person, I have made a difference," said participant D.

### **RQ 3 Summary**

The goal of RQ 3 is to determine how successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success. In order to accomplish this goal, 2 interview questions were presented to the participants which generated 44 responses and six themes. Success was defined by the following three themes: (a) Financial comfort and independence, (b) Fulfillment, and (c) Impact. Whereas

success was said to be tracked and measured by the following three themes: (a) Level of financial independence and wealth, (b) Level of fulfilment; and (c) Number of people impacted.

#### **Research Question 4**

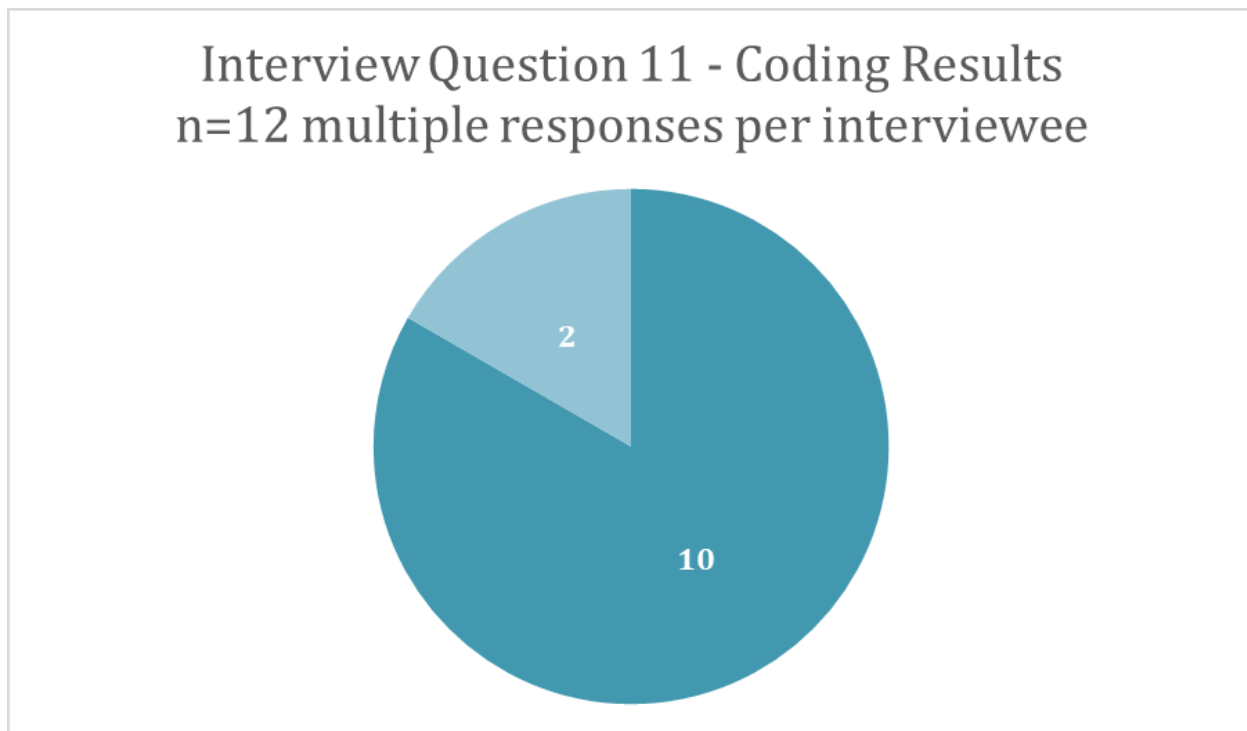
Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers? The following two interview questions were used to satisfy RQ 3:

- IQ 11: What is one action / decision that you wished you could go back in time and do over?
- IQ 12: What would you tell a new hustler if she / he asked you “is it worth it”?

#### ***Interview Question 11***

What is one action / decision that you wished you could go back in time and do over? 12 responses were generated for IQ 11, upon the completion of the data analysis process, 2 themes emerged which were: (a) No decision or action, and (b) Industry specific deals. The reason only two themes emerged is due to the fact that 10 of the participants highlighted that they would not change any action or decision. Figure 11 is the frequency graph that displays the three themes IQ 11.

Figure 11. Interview Question 11



*No decision or action.* Ten of the participants said there was no action or decision they would change if they could go back in time. This is because as per the participants, they would not have attained the wisdom they have now if they change or omit an action or decision. Thus, the participants explained that since they are shaped by their past and are content with who they are and the level of success they have attained they then would not change any action or decision. Wisdom and experience, according to participant J, serve as a repository of best practices. Participant J goes on to explain that as a hustler he has confronted a multiplicity of circumstances and situations while engaged in hustlenomics, and hence, the experience and the lessons attained along the way serve as a point of reference from which they can draw and learn, and which intrinsically provides guidance. This wisdom, all ten participants consider valuable and thus the basis for not wanting to change any decision or action. As Participant I stated that “Experience is the best teacher.” As Participant B said, “you know I would be lying if I didn’t

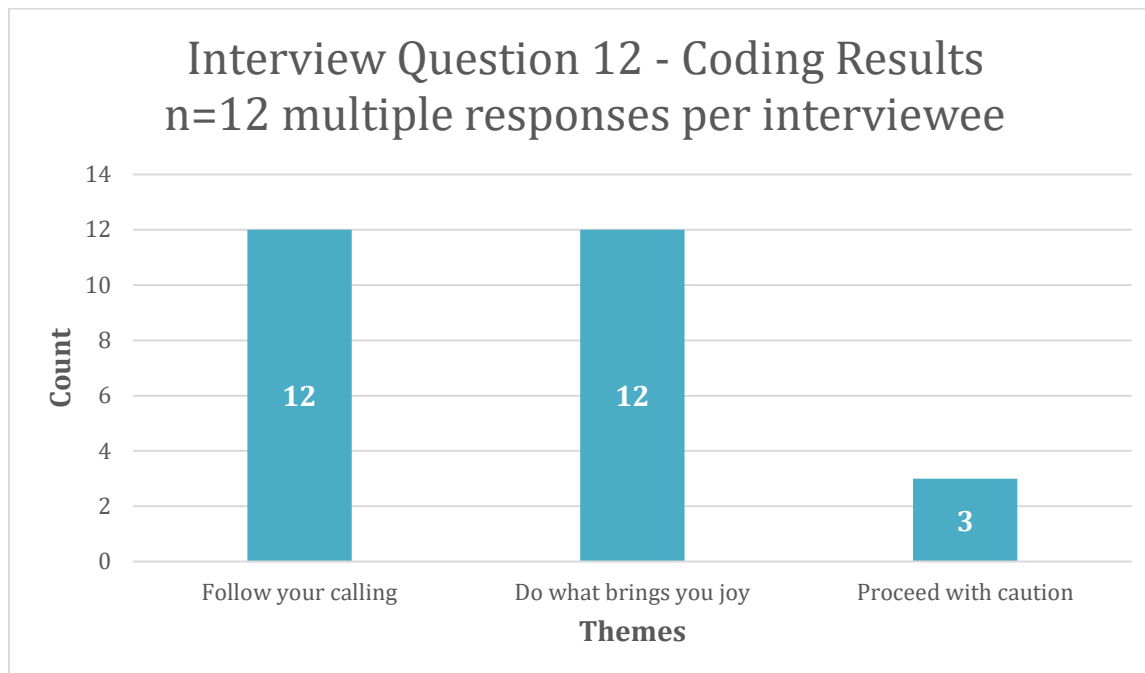
say the thought hasn't crossed my mind a million times you know but I'm just like damn I wouldn't be where I am now and I love and really like who I am now.”

*Industry specific deals.* Two participants stated that there are decisions that they would change which are specific to their industry. Participant F stated, “I would have done more owner finance deals and approached commercial real estate earlier.” Participant D shared that “I wish I did more blogging when it first became a thing now I would have been a one of the main people. I didn't know it would have been such a big thing, you live and learn.”

### ***Interview Question 12***

What would you tell a new hustler if she / he asked you “is it worth it”? For IQ 12, all the participants stated that despite the challenges that they experience in hustlenomics and the hustleconomy as a whole, it is worth it to engage in it. 27 responses were attained from the participants and three themes were garnered from the responses. The themes collected were: (a) Follow your calling, (b) Do what brings you joy, and (c) Proceed with caution. The frequency graph in Figure 12 presents the three themes derived from IQ 12 after the data analysis process.

Figure 12. Interview Question 12



*Follow your calling.* All 12 respondents acknowledged that participating in the hustle economy is worthwhile, and that people should pursue their passions. The hustle economy, according to all 12 participants, is not an economic climate fit for everyone because of its rigorous and arduous setting. As a result, according to the participants, it's almost as if one is called to be a hustler, and hence, they develop the mental capacity and motivation to do so. Accordingly, the participants held that if one is called to hustle, then they should do it because they are equipped. As per Participant B, “doing the whole hustling thing and the lifestyle that comes with it is a calling and doing whatever one feels called to do is worth it.”

*Do what brings you joy.* The study's 12 participants agreed that people should do what makes them happy. Participants in the study went on to say that taking part in hustlenomics despite its challenges was fulfilling to them since it made them feel pleased and joyful. However, according to the participants, if one is unhappy participating in hustlenomics within the hustle economy, it is not for them, and they should avoid it. Participant E said “people should do

what brings them joy. I hustle because I make impact and that brings me joy”

*Proceed with caution.* Three participants indicated that aspiring hustlers should proceed with caution when attempting to engage in hustlenomics. Although all three participants felt it was worthwhile to participate in hustlenomics, they also felt many new hustlers choose to engage in it for the wrong reasons. The participants explained that many individuals engage in hustlenomics because it is the new trend and for the glamor that comes with it. However as Participant B puts it, “social media is not real, it’s not real people, the sooner people see it the better for them.” Participant L said, “people think hustling is about balling, making money and living the flashy life, it isn’t. external validity doesn’t define success and being flashy and popular as a hustler does not mean individual success.”

#### **RQ 4 Summary**

RQ 4's purpose is to acquire recommendations for future prospective hustlers from the study's participants. Two interview questions were offered to the participants in order to achieve this objective, and 39 responses were received. Five themes emerged when the data analysis process was completed. The five themes that emerged were: (a) No decision or action, (b) Industry specific deals, (c) Follow your calling, (d) Do what brings you joy, and (e) Proceed with caution.

#### **Chapter Four Summary**

The objective of this chapter was to unearth the challenges and obstacles influencer hustlers face and the strategies and best practices effective influencer hustlers employ to attain success as they engage in hustlenomics. Four research questions were generated to address this topic. The research questions were:

- RQ 1: What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?

- RQ 2: What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers that are engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 3: How do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success?
- RQ 4: Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful influencer hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers?

To answer the research questions and to accomplish the research's goal, a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted during which 12 interviews were conducted to attain the insights, perspectives, and lived experiences of 12 effective influencer hustlers. Each participant was asked 12 open-ended interview questions that are analogous to the research questions. From the 12 interview questions, a total of 355 responses with 48 themes emerging upon the completion of the data analysis process. Table 5 summarizes the themes that were discovered during the data analysis process of this phenomenological study. Chapter five deliberates on the themes generated during the phenomenological study. Furthermore, Chapter five deliberates on the study's implications, provides recommendations for future study, and presents the findings of the study.



**Table 5***Summary of Themes for Four Research Questions*

RQ1. What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?	RQ2. What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers that are engaged in hustlenomics?	RQ3. How do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success?	RQ4. Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful influencer hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers?
Mind	Mindfulness/ spirituality/ self-work	Financial comfort and independence	No decision or action
Money	Commitment to skill development and acquisition of knowledge	Fulfillment	Industry specific deals
Hustle environment	Experience- wisdom	Impact	Follow your calling
Knowledge	Resource management	Level of financial independence and wealth	Do what brings you joy
Technical	Professional and personal support	Level of fulfilment	Proceed with caution
Intensity of challenges	Be proactive	Number of people impacted	
Scalability	Niche- stay relevant		
Algorithms	Take action continuously		
Challenges met expectations	Work on the mind daily		
Continuous obstacles	Continuous learning and self-improvement		
Phases obstacles	Have a support team		
	Good quality knowledge		
	Support staff		
	Capital		
	Equipment		
	Money		
	Passion		
	Impact		
	Business need		
	Learner		
	Entrepreneurial		
	Leader		
	Risk taker		
	Resilient		
	Creative		
	Positive		

*Note:* This table encapsulates all of the themes that emerged throughout the data analysis activity

## Chapter 5: Findings

Society is experiencing a Hustledemic, the precipitous expansion of the hustleconomy. People pursuing prosperity and financial freedom through hustlenomics are attributed with this rapid development. However, the hustleconomy is nothing like the formal economic sector. It is an economic arena that goes often unregulated and is characterized by its vigor, competitiveness, and fast-pace (Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020; Oberholtzer, 2016; Smith, 2016a & b). As a result, many hustlers who want to engage in this economy confront a multiplicity of distinct but not impenetrable impediments (Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020).

The objective of this research is to develop a road map of approaches, strategies, and best practices that hustlers can employ to navigate the tempestuous terrain of the hustleconomy to achieve prosperity and financial freedom. Accordingly, a phenomenological investigation was conducted. The study included 12 effective influencer hustlers who answered 12 open-ended questions in an interview. The insights, perspectives, and insights shared by the participants provided the information that was utilized to identify the challenges and obstacles hustlers face as well as to develop the road map of approaches, strategies, and best practices that hustlers can use to navigate the arduous environment of the hustleconomy to achieve success.

This chapter commences with a summary of the study. Additionally, in this chapter, a synopsis of the key findings from the study is also included. This chapter also delves into the study's implications. The Hustlenomics Map to Success Model is a framework for implementing the strategies and best practices obtained during the data collection and analysis phase. Finally, this chapter culminates with the investigator's recommendations for future research and observations from the author.

## Summary of the Study

The aim of this qualitative phenomenological study is to learn about the adversities and barriers faced, as well as the techniques, methods, and best practices that influencer hustlers use to succeed. The following four research questions were used to steer the research and were answered in order to better understand the present phenomenon:

- RQ 1: What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 2: What are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers that are engaged in hustlenomics?
- RQ 3: How do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success?
- RQ 4: Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful influencer hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers?

The data collection procedures defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which require the investigator to select persons actively and consciously, were used in the data collection activities of this study. Participants were identified and chosen on the basis of a predetermined inclusion criteria, which was guided by literature and were decided upon using purposive sampling with maximum variation selection procedures to ensure for the utmost level of confidence in the outcome of the study. The following are the criteria of inclusion: (a) must be an influencer hustler, (b) must earn income in the hustleconomy, (c) can be located and contacted via social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, Spotify and YouTube, (d) individuals who have multiple gigs or hustle, (e) an influencer with over 50,000 followers on their social media platform, (f) influencer that seeks financial liberation through hustlenomics, (g) influencer hustlers based in Nigeria or USA, and (h) individuals who assent to be recorded. Using the criteria for inclusion, 15 effective influencer hustlers were recruited via the following social

media sites: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Spotify and a finalized sample of 12 successful influencer hustlers was determined.

To gather the data, a semi-structured interview technique was employed utilizing 12 open-ended questions to generate detailed responses which comprised of each participant's perceptions, views, and lived experience. The interview process adhered to the interview techniques and protocol as explained by Creswell and Creswell (2018). A two-step technique which was *prima facie* and content validity, as well as expert review validity was used to determine the validity of the interview questions. A pilot interview was also done to ensure that the interview method was reliable.

The data collected were presented by research question and the analogous interview questions in Chapter 4. The resulting themes were accompanied by a detailed description along with a frequency graph to provide a visual depiction of the data collected. Following the completion of the data analysis procedure, a total of 355 responses were obtained from the 12 interview questions, with 48 themes emerging.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This section presents the discussion of the 48 themes that emerged during the phenomenological study. In this dialogue, each theme is designated with the research question that correlates to it. Also, a comprehensive discussion on how each theme is connected to each research question is presented. Furthermore, the findings of the study are assessed against existing literature that focuses on hustlenomics, the hustleconomy, hustlers, the impediments and conundrums faced by hustlers, as well as the methods and best practices used by successful and effective hustlers. The goal of this process is to deduce if study's findings and existing literature concurs, conflicts, or findings from the study enhances existing literature.

### ***Results for RQ1***

RQ 1 inquired, “What challenges are faced by influencer hustlers when engaged in hustlenomics?” The principal aim of RQ 1 is to distinguish the frequently experienced difficulties and barriers that influencer hustlers confront in their journey towards effectiveness and prosperity in hustlenomics. As a result, 11 themes closely correlated to the first research question (RQ1) emerged from the findings and are used to define the obstacles and quandaries faced by influencer hustlers operating in hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. The themes that were garnered were: (a) Mind, (b) Money, (c) Hustle environment, (d) Knowledge, (e) Technical, (f) Intensity of challenges, (g) Scalability, (h) Algorithms, (i) Challenges met expectations, (J) Continuous challenges, and (K) Phases challenges.

### ***Discussion of RQ1***

From literature, it was garnered that the privatization of capital established the notion of inequality, where capital is owned and controlled by a few elites (Wisman, 2014). As a result, as per Wisman, the formal economic system is based on a structure in which the elite own and control capital and grant the masses the access they require to survive. According to Awan (2015), this has resulted in a massive accumulation of capital by the wealthy and social inequality and income gaps for the masses. Thus, inequality arises as a result of unequal capital ownership and the systemic structures used by the elites to maintain status quo (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016; Wisman, 2014). Accordingly, it creates a barrier that hustlers face as they strive for success and financial liberation (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016; Wisman, 2014).

Inequality is the foundation of struggle (Thieme, 2013, 2017). There are two varieties of struggles: the lived condition and the fight to survive and conquer it (Thieme et al, 2021). Struggle is a condition in which those that lack capital are compelled to live in. This struggle

condition is characterized by adversity, systematic and institutional ostracism, and mental melees. Struggle is also the unceasing battle to survive and attain financial freedom.

Hugo (1863/ 1992), Dr. King (1966), Twain (1872/ 1993), as well as Eedris (2004), Fela Kuti (1971,1978), Marley (1974,1979), Olamide (2019), and Tupac (1992,1993) speak to the condition of adversity and struggle. However, their work also speaks to the concept of hope of those that struggle. This hope is a notion grounded on the struggle to survive while achieving financial independence.

The hustleconomy, however, is not for the faint of heart, according to literature. As per Thieme (2018), the hustleconomy is erratic, dissident, and risky. It is propelled by an incessant and dogged exploration of alternative means of opportunities beyond the formal economy (Huynh and Nguyen, 2020; Oberholtzer, 2016; Schneider, 2016). Furthermore, Schneider (2016) holds that due to the fact that the same government regulations, protections, and institutions that the formal economy benefit from is not afforded to the hustleconomy, it is an economic terrain that is tempestuous and this heightens the riskiness of it.

With this in mind, it is obvious that the findings gathered from the participants of the study is in agreement with literature. The study revealed how issues of inequality and struggle plays out and impacts people in everyday society. The findings from the study highlights that the mind, inequal access to capital, and the hustleconomy itself are major challenges for the hustler. The difficulty of accessing capital, instable income, along with the volatile, precarious, and the ambiguous nature of the hustleconomy was discussed during the study and thus aligns with literature.

The study contributed to the literature in a variety of ways. The study contributes to literature by demonstrating the breadth of the impact of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy on

the hustler's psyche. It also reveals the differences between issues that come in waves and those that are constant. Furthermore, the study was able to show the interconnectedness of the challenges even though they are distinct notions. For instance, the impact of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy's environment on the mind of the hustler was expounded on by this study. Finally, this study contributed to literature by exposing technological challenges that influencer hustlers confront, such as algorithm hurdles.

### ***Results for RQ2***

RQ 2 queried, “what are the best practices and strategies employed by successful influencer hustlers that are engaged in hustlenomics?” The ambition of RQ 2 is to identify the key strategies and best practices effective influencer hustlers employ to succeed in hustlenomics. From the five interview questions asked to address RQ 2, a total of 26 themes were discovered. The seven themes that emerged as general strategies were: a) Mindfulness/ spirituality/ inner self-work, (b) Commitment to skill development and acquisition of knowledge, (c) Experience - wisdom, (d) Resource management, (e) Profession and personal support, (f) Be proactive, (g) Stay relevant / know niche. the four themes that emerged as the day-to-day strategies and themes were: (a) Take action continuously, (b) Work on the mind daily, (c) Continuous learning and self-improvement, and (d) have a support team. The four themes that were identified as important resources needed by effective hustlers were:(a) Good quality knowledge, (b) Support staff, (c) Capital, and (d) Equipment. Finally (a) Money; (b) Passion; (c) Impact; and (d) Business need, were identified as what motivates and inspires effective hustlers.

### ***Discussion of RQ2***

Hustlers, as per Smith (2016) are individuals that engage in hustlenomics because they want to survive and be financially free. Hustlers desire to be financially free of adversity,

struggle, have control over their lives, pursue their passions, and to rebel against oppressive systems (Castells, 2015; Sessions et.al., 2021; Smith, 2016 a & b; Thieme, 2018). Oberholtzer (2016) claims that hustlers are those who labor intensively to make a living. They are those who are prepared to brave the hustleconomy's treacherous terrain in order to generate money (Oberholtzer, 2016; Thieme, 2018).

As a result, anyone who desires to become a hustler and operate within the hustleconomy must be persistent, well-informed, experienced, skilled, determined, and process ambition, innovation, strong motivation, great energy, and extreme drive (Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020; Oberholtzer, 2016; Smith, 2016a & b). According to Oberholtzer (2016), hustlers succeed by multitasking and networking, pontificating and learning, and competing as they grow. As a consequence, in order to stay competitive, people who choose to engage in hustlenomics within the hustleconomy must display creativity and ingenuity (Oberholtzer, 2016; Thieme, 2018). They must be entrepreneurial, attain the capability to organize and motivate themselves, and also acquire and continuously develop a varied set of abilities and skills due to the competitive and evolving nature of the hustleconomy (Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020; Oberholtzer, 2016; Smith, 2016a & b).

The precarious nature of the hustleconomy necessitates that hustlers control risk, thus, an effective hustler must know how to not only assume risk but also manage it (Medina & Schneider, 2018; Schneider, 2016; Thieme, 2018). However, despite its fragile character, Thieme (2018) contends that the hustleconomy keeps coherence and is perpetually active, which is essential for hustlers' survival. Furthermore, when it comes to issues of inequality and the never-ending struggle to survive, Hugo (1863/ 1992), Dr. King (1966), Twain (1872/ 1993), as well as Eedris (2004), Fela Kuti (1971,1978), Marley (1974,1979), Olamide (2019), and Tupac



(1992,1993), highlighted the need for those who struggle to acquire knowledge, be spiritually and mentally grounded, and attain self-pride, which they believe are the strategies to survival and financial, mental, and spiritual freedom.

The strategies, motivations, and attributes a hustler needs to be effective in hustlenomics that was garnered through literature is in concurrence with what was gathered from the study's participants. From the study, participants emphasized the general strategies and the daily work hustlers must do to be and remain effective. It was discovered that successful hustlers continuously work on the psyche, acquire knowledge, develop their skills, and utilize their experience and wisdom as a point of reference to tackle the challenges and quandaries that they encounter in hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. From the study it was revealed that a hustler is motivated by money, their passion, desire to create impact, and business need. Even the attributes derived from literature was in agreement with that gathered from the participants. The participants held that the following attributes: learner, entrepreneurial, leader, risk taker, resilient, creative, and positive, are essential for an effective hustler: Thus, the essence of the information acquired from literature and that which was garnered from the participants of the study are in congruence.

The study does, however, contribute to the literature by expanding the techniques required for success. For instance, the study discovered that a hustler requires broad tactics to succeed, and it then goes on to explain how they attain these general strategies by discussing the daily / continuous approaches they must employ. The study also added to the literature by emphasizing the importance of professional and personal support, as well as hustlers' ability to obtain and manage resources. The participants expounded on the type of knowledge needed and some of the sources successful hustlers currently go to, to obtain knowledge. Lastly, this study

contributed to literature by unveiling some of the resources effective hustlers require to be successful in hustlenomics.

### ***Results for RQ3***

RQ 3 asked, “how do successful influencer hustlers define, measure, and track success?” RQ 3's purpose is to decipher how effective influencer hustlers define, quantify, and evaluate success. Six themes developed as a result of the data analysis procedure. There were three themes that determined success. Success was characterized by the following three themes: (a) Financial comfort and independence, (b) Fulfillment, and (c) Impact. Whereas success tracked and measured by the following three themes: (a) Level of financial independence and wealth, (b) Level of fulfilment; and (c) Number of people impacted.

### ***Discussion of RQ3***

Although literature does not explicitly address how an effective influencer hustler defines, assesses, and evaluates success, it does provide insight into what an effective hustler considers success. Individuals participate in hustlenomics, according to Smith (2016), in order to survive and achieve financial independence. This is due to the fact that hustlers aspire to attain financial autonomy from hardship while attaining power over their lives and the opportunity to pursue their aspirations (Castells, 2015; Sessions et.al., 2021; Smith, 2016a & b; Thieme, 2018). The music of Eedris (2004), Fela Kuti (1971,1978), Marley (1974,1979), Olamide (2019), and Tupac (1992,1993) as well as the literature of Hugo (1863/ 1992), Dr. King (1966), Twain (1872/ 1993), indicated that those who struggle seek survival and economic, psychological, and spiritual autonomy. In addition, literature has also revealed that the wealthy preserve their elite status through inheritance (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016); capital accumulation (Biondi & Olla,

2020); and social mobility (Alvaredo, 2018; Hodgson, 2016). (Corak, 2013; Jerrim & Macmillan 2015).

With this in mind, it can be deduced through literature that success for hustlers could be financial autonomy, charge over their lives, and the chance to engage in their passions. Additionally, inheritance, financial accumulation, and social mobility can all be termed factors of success for individuals seeking the financial freedom enjoyed by the affluent. However, no practical means to quantifying and assessing success was attained in literature.

The six themes that were derived from the study were in agreement with literature. Participants of the study highlighted that success for a hustler are financial comfort and independence, fulfilment, and the chance to make an impact. Similar to literature, no practical universal means to tracking and assessing success was attained through the study. However, what was garnered from the study is that the quantification and assessment of success is an individual concept thus, making difficult to attain a universal assessment of success.

#### ***Results for RQ4***

RQ 4 asked, “Based on their experiences, what recommendations would successful influencer hustlers have for future aspiring hustlers?” The ambition of RQ 4 is to gather advice, suggestions, and recommendations for future and seasoned hustlers on how to be effective in hustlenomics from the study's participants. When the data analysis was finished, five themes emerged. The five themes that emerged were: (a) No decision or action, (b) Industry specific deals, (c) Follow your calling, (d) Do what brings you joy, and (e) Proceed with caution.

#### ***Discussion of RQ4***

To address RQ 4, the study obtained guidance, ideas, and recommendations from the study's participants on how to be successful in hustlenomics for both new and experienced

hustlers. To answer this research question, the study yielded five themes. The majority of research participants stated that they would not alter any past action or decision since those acts and decisions shaped who they are and provided an anthology of experiences that serve as a repository of wisdom that is valuable to them as they engage in hustlenomics and operate in the hustleconomy. However, a small number of interviewees stated that if they could go back in time, they would execute certain industry-focused transactions. These are insights that adds to literature because such perspectives were not garnered from literature.

The participants made three important recommendations for anybody involved hustlenomics within the hustleconomy. The first recommendation is to follow ones calling. According to the participants, while the hustleconomy is a difficult economic sector in which to make a living, it is worth examining, particularly for those who want to pursue their passions while achieving financial independence. Hence, due to its tough and demanding setting, the hustleconomy is not an economic sector suitable for everyone, according to the participants. As a result, those who are bold enough to participate in hustlenomics do so because they are born and thus called to hustle and are endowed with the innate abilities to overcome the obstacles and challenges that it presents.

This concept is slightly different from what has been obtained from literature. According to Thieme et al. (2021), hustlenomics was built on the foundation of inequality. People join the hustleconomy for a variety of reasons, according to Thieme et al. (2021). People join the hustleconomy, according to Smith (2016a & b), because they want to pursue their passions and enjoy life on their own terms. The idea of a person being called to be a hustler, on the other hand, is not discussed in literature.

The study's second advice is that people should do what makes them happy. This theme

is supported by literature. Individuals participate in the hustle economy, according to Smith (2016a & b), not only to achieve financial freedom, but also to have self - determination and the opportunity to explore their ambitions. As a result, the hustleconomy is a place where individuals who want to pursue their passion and participate in activities that bring them joy can do so.

Individuals should engage in hustlenomics with caution, according to the study's third advice. This is partly in agreement with the literature. This is because, according to Thieme (2018), the hustleconomy is a perilous, subversive, and disruptive economic environment. According to Schneider (2016), it is a risky economic environment because it is deprived of access to the same government parameters, securities, and agencies as the formal economy. Therefore, from literature it is garnered that the hustleconomy is an economic space that should be approached and engaged with caution.

The study does, however, contribute to the literature by showing that, while the hustleconomy is a worthwhile arena to participate in, many new hustlers choose to do so for the wrong reasons. According to the findings of the study, many people engage hustlenomics and the hustleconomy because it is popular and glamorous, and as a result, new entrants should be cautious.

### **Implications of the Study**

The chief objective of this study is to develop a guide of strategies and best practices for hustlers to enhance their chances of success and effectiveness in hustlenomics. Hence, the findings of this study yield a set of insights and conceptions that, when implemented as indicated, can considerably improve the chances of success and effectiveness of hustlers. Although the focus of this study is hustlers and the development of the roadmap that will aid in their success, the findings from this study attains significant implications for also the

hustleconomy, academia, government agencies, and private sector industries that engage with hustlers.

### ***Implications for hustlenomics and the hustleconomy***

The hustleconomy is an underappreciated economy that is often dismissed as an indigent and criminal economy. As a result, this research contributes to the rethinking of how hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy are viewed. This is essential because changing how hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy are considered can begin to assist in emphasizing their effect, implication, and significance in the formal economy. This is particularly noteworthy since society is undergoing a hustledemic, which refers to the fast expansion of the hustleconomy.

According to the findings of this study, the hustleconomy is a notoriously risky field with a lot of potential. It was also demonstrated that the hustleconomy crosses over into the formal economy. As a result, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of hustlers and the hustleconomy is critical to the economy's overall performance. As a consequence of the study's strategies and best practices, hustlers now have some guidance on their path to prosperity, which helps improve the hustleconomy's effectiveness.

### ***Implications for formal sector***

The forces at work in hustlenomics and the hustleconomy, and how they interface with the formal economic sector are revealed in this study. This research also presents a paradigm for hustlers to use in order to improve their chances of success in hustlenomics. Thus, since the hustlenomics connects with the formal economy, when hustlers improve their effectiveness, they have a beneficial impact on the formal economy also.

Although the Hustlenomics Model for Success is based on the ideas, views, and lived experience of effective hustlers, the model established can also be effective in the formal

economic arena. This is because people who work in the formal economy can use the strategies presented in the model to achieve success and effectiveness in their careers and jobs. This is especially true for those that are entrepreneurial or small business owners. Furthermore, the study's findings reveal gaps and methods in which the formal economy may benefit and support hustlers. For example, one of the important conclusions is that money is scarce, and financial institutions can fill the void by offering financial goods and services such as money management tools and access to lending services tailored to hustlers.

### ***Implications for government agencies***

The conclusions of this study help institutions that transact with or for hustlers such as government agencies particularly those in charge of economic planning and labor. This is because demographic information is utilized to formulate economic policy, the creation of appropriate institutions, and the distribution of financial resources. The findings of this study aid government agencies by assisting them in understanding the hustleconomy and the hustlers who engage in hustlenomics since this population remains largely unknown. Furthermore, with access to the information in this study, government agencies can now begin to consider how they can better serve this dynamic population by assisting them in gaining access to the resources, infrastructure, institutions, and capital. For instance, one of the major dilemma hustlers have to contend with is their mental health thus providing mental health services will be beneficial. Access to capital is another concern identified by hustlers thus government programs that provide low-interest rate loans can prove to be valuable to hustlers as well.

### ***Implications for academia***

The findings of this study add to the body of knowledge by putting emphasis on the topic of hustler, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy. It benefits the academic community by growing

the corpus of literature on hustlenomics, hustlers, and the hustleconomy while also raising awareness of an underrepresented demographic. In addition, the findings of this study revealed several gaps in the literature on hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy. As a result, prospects for additional investigation are highlighted. Finally, for effective hustlers, knowledge and skill development are important strategies. This is a void that can be filled by academia. Academia can give specific courses and learning programs for hustlers, allowing them to get the skills and information they need to be effective and successful.

### **Application**

The study's findings in combination with the discoveries from the literature review, were used to create the Hustlenomics Model for Success. This tool was engendered to assist hustlers tackle the obstacles and problems they encounter in hustlenomics with the proper strategies and best practices as they embark on their path to success. There are three layers to the Hustlenomics Model for Success tool; the outer, middle, and core layers.

The imprisoned effect of the restrictions and challenges that hustlers confront in hustlenomics is portrayed by the outer layer box of the Hustlenomics Model for Success. The mind, hustleconomy's environment, access to knowledge, and capital are the main conundrums hustlers encounter as they navigate the tempestuous terrain of the hustleconomy. Although the investigation uncovered other hurdles and roadblocks, these issues were grouped with the four main concerns. As a result, by addressing the four main difficulties, the extra issues will be solved as well.

The wheel in the middle layer represents the ongoing process of addressing the barriers and difficulties of hustlenomics, as well as the implementation of the tactics and best practices that hustlers should employ to reach effectiveness and success. The strategies and best practices



derived from the study's findings make up the middle layer. Thus, inner wheel is constructed with the following eight key strategies: (a) mental and spiritual wellness, (b) health and wellness, (c) acquire knowledge and transform to wisdom, (d) skill development, (e) capital, (f) experience- repository of wisdom, (g) support, and (h) be proactive.

The inner layer of the Hustlenomics Model for Success represents hustlers' ultimate goal: success. The study defined success as (a) wealth, (b) fulfillment, and (c) impact, which was substantiated by the findings of the literature review. As a result, a hustler will be better equipped to achieve effectiveness and success in hustlenomics by addressing the problems through the continuous implementation of the methods shared in the Hustlenomics Model for Success tool.

Figure 13.

Hustlenomics Model for Success.



**Study Conclusion**

The goal of this research was to uncover the barriers and quandaries that effective hustlers face, as well as the strategies and practices they employ to overcome the challenges to achieve success. To accomplish the goal of this research, a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted focusing on the population of influencer hustlers was the subject of the investigation. 12 influencer hustlers addressed 12 open-ended questions during an interview

process. At the end of the study, crucial insights were exposed about the challenges and obstacles that hustlers endure, as well an understanding of concepts hustlers need to comprehend and actions they need to execute to prosper. The outcome of the study in amalgamation with the learnings from the literature review were utilized to develop the Hustlenomics Model for Success which is an instrument intended to aid hustlers as they strive towards success.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The goal of this phenomenological study was to identify the barriers and obstacles as well as the strategies and best practices hustlers employ to attain success in hustlenomics. Hence, in the process of addressing the objective of this study, there were gaps in literature and additional areas which it is observed that required additional research. The recommendations for future research are as follows:

#### ***Further In-Depth Study of The Findings***

Despite the fact that this study has raised awareness of the present hustledemic, its problems and barriers, as well as the methods and best practices used by successful hustlers, there is still room for more research. As a result, a deeper dive into each of the particular themes identified during the study is highly suggested. To gain a better knowledge of the essence, effect, and relevance of each difficulty, impediment, and strategy or best practice.

#### ***Size Hustleconomy and Scope of The Hustledemic***

The exact magnitude of hustlenomics and the hustleconomy is seldom understood. Furthermore, it was discovered during the study that being a hustler is currently one of the most sought-after professions. As a result, the hustleconomy is increasing and the hustledemic is strengthening. However, nothing is known about how this new tendency may affect the hustledemic and the hustleconomy as a whole. As a result, it is strongly advised that more

research be undertaken on this subject.

### ***Development of an Assessment Tool for New Entrant Hustlers***

One of the study's findings is that people who are brave enough to partake in hustlenomics within the hustleconomy do so because they are born to hustle. Hence, these individuals are born with the natural talents and capacity to overcome the barriers and problems they face in hustlenomics and the hustleconomy. With this in mind, as the hustleconomy is now a highly desired sector to engage in, it is advised that more research be undertaken to find these intrinsic qualities and an assessment tool be developed to aid aspiring hustlers.

### **Final Thoughts**

According to what can be inferred from this research, hustlenomics and the hustleconomy can no longer be relegated as the economy of the poor and underdeveloped market economies. Indeed, the hustleconomy can no longer be characterized as the economy of drug dealers, con artists, pimps, and hoes by society. The author, who is both a scholar and a hustler, is not an outlier. In actuality, this research demonstrates that regular people are hustlers. As more people join the hustleconomy to engage in hustlenomics due to the intensification of the struggle condition, the emergence of online applications and platforms, and individuals' quest to live life on their terms, everyday people are allotted the chance to disrupt the traditional means of making a living in order to survive and prosper.

This research is the story of hustlers, individuals who are brave enough to navigate through the tempestuous terrain of the hustleconomy to engage in hustlenomics in their attempt to survive and thrive. To grasp the phenomenon of hustle and to attain strategies and best practices to aid hustlers achieve success, this research commenced at the genesis of the issue that has led to the birth of hustlenomics. Through literature it was discovered that humans are social

beings that have prospered by employing intricate systems of division of labor and collaborative production to provide the essentials for society to live (Johnson & Taylor, 2011; Pagano, 2020, Wisman, 2014). However, the privatization of resources along with this collective need to survive has led individuals to willingly and reluctantly contribute to the manifestation of inequality which is the catalyst of struggle.

The author agrees with Muller (2013) and Friedman (2007) that society has enjoyed the benefits of capitalism. However, the benefits of capitalism do not, in the author's opinion, balance the hardship and suffering that many members of society endure as a result of the existing form of production. Indeed, as per the author, it is convenient for Friedman to claim that a business' only duty is to maximize profits when the surplus that the company enjoys results from the work of the producers, the unequal access to capital, and societal arrangements designed to collect the surpluses the producers generate and distribute them to the elites. According to the author businesses and the elites cannot simply collect the surplus and leave the producers to languish in struggle and suffering. This is due to the fact that it will be detrimental to society as a whole as experienced with the decline of feudalism and mercantilism. Indeed, the author highlights that due to struggle, the masses developed resentment and indignation and thus inspiring a popular uprising against the elites and government. Accordingly, both feudalism and mercantilism which both relied on fundamentally unjust capital ownership, trade balances, and trade practices experienced its decline partly because elites hoarded capital and the benefits of the mode of production.

Marx's (Marx, 1996, 2016) argument is that capitalism utilizes exploitation and alienation of the producer to yield surplus for the elite. Thus, similar to the revolt of feudalism and mercantilism, Marx claims that capitalism will end due to the revolution, the uprising of the

masses. Although, the author agrees with Marx that capitalism is built on exploitation and alienation of the producer to create profit for the elite, the author does not agree that there would be a revolution or an end to capitalism. Rather the author believes that just like previous modes of production, capitalism will evolve. Indeed, how society produces is constantly changing and evolving based on technology and society's quest to earn more money and attain a certain level of living. For instance, mercantilism did not end, it evolved into capitalism. This is due to the fact that the way of conducting business during mercantilism was disrupted by the discontent of the masses and the fact that the elites of the time, the merchants had amassed enough capital to fund the development of productive technologies. Hence, capitalism emerged from mercantilism due to the evolution of commerce that emerged when the masses were discontent and the individual's inherent entrepreneurial disposition was liberated from the limitations of mercantilism and feudalism.

Similar to previous eras, society is currently experiencing another evolution. No longer is the formal economy sufficient to meet the needs and wants of society. Subsequently, struggle, disgruntlement, and the introduction of new technology is spurring a change. This change has resulted in the phenomenon of the hustledemic, the rapid expansion of the hustleconomy. In other words, hustlers are causing a disruption. Hustlers, individuals with innate entrepreneurial abilities as well as the motivation and courage to dive into the hustleconomy, an economic arena known for being ambiguous, unstable, and highly risky but could be highly profitable are sparing this phenomenon. The courage and motivation of hustlers as discovered in the study is driven by the hustler's desire to earn more, pursue their passion, and create an impact and thus, success for a hustlers will be attaining fulfilment, impact, and wealth. However, as revealed in the research, the hustleconomy is tinted by the reputation of being the economy of the inferior – the poor and

illegitimate and thus unworthy of economic investment from society. This viewpoint, participants revealed during the study as resulted in a tempestuous economic arena that is unwelcoming for commerce and hence challenges and impedes hustlers' ability to reach their full potential and attain success.

Because of this, according to the author, society must approach and invest in hustlenomics in the same way as businesses and the government did during the transition from mercantilism to capitalism. As a result, hustlenomics will be able to properly develop from capitalism through the evolution of commerce that is happening as a result of discontentment and the liberation of each person's innate entrepreneurial tendency from the boundaries of the formal economy.

The task of fully developing the hustleconomy is not one that should be left entirely to hustlers. This is because in order to fully harness the potential of the hustleconomy, all sectors must be involved in investing and suppling the essential services, institutions, policies and capital needed to harness the highest promise of hustlenomics and the hustlers engaged in it. Although this research is only the beginning to understanding hustlers and hustlenomics, the Hustlenomics Model for Success, an outcome of the study provides society with a tool to aid in harnessing the strengths of hustlenomics. Indeed, the Hustlenomics Model for Success reveals the challenges and obstacles as well as the key strategies and best practices that is vital to enabling hustlers improve their effectiveness and achieve success. Hence, varying sectors of society now have the tool and information they need to begin investing and building the hustleconomy.

With the Hustlenomics Model for Success and the findings of this study, government agencies notably those in charge of labor and economic planning now attain the information

needed to better serve hustlers and the hustleconomy. For instance, with the demographic data from this research, enables them to engender suitable institutions, economic policies, and distribute financial resources for hustlers and the hustleconomy. Also, with the Hustlenomics Model for Success they are also able to institute programs that provides strategic services for hustlers for instance, furnishing mental health treatment centers will be helpful because one of the main issues that hustlers face is their mental health.

The author also calls on the academic community to invest in hustlers and the hustleconomy. This study underlined considerable gaps in the body of knowledge about hustlers, hustlenomics, and the hustleconomy. As a consequence, opportunities for further research were indicated. Furthermore, knowledge and skill advancement were identified as crucial strategies for successful hustlers. Accordingly, the academic community can fill this gap by providing specialized courses and learning programs that will enable hustlers to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success. The Hustlenomics Model for Success can serve as a guide to the type of courses and learning programs that will meet the needs of hustlers.

Hustlers are everywhere because the hustleconomy is a boundaryless economic arena. Accordingly, hustlenomics intercepts the formal economic arena and hence, for the formal economic arena to benefit from hustlers and hustlenomics, it to must invest in the development of the hustleconomy and hustlers. The Hustlenomics Model for Success is based on the perspective and real-world experience of successful hustlers and since hustlers are engaged in the formal economy as well, the model will be advantageous for the formal economy. This is so that those who work in the formal sector can successfully and effectively advance their careers and occupations by utilizing the tactics outlined in the model. The study's findings also underline ways the formal economy may help and assist hustlers. One of the key findings, for instance, is



that there is a lack of money. Thus, banks and other financial institutions may invest in hustlenomics by engendering and providing financial products and services including loans and money management tools designed specifically for hustlers.

Finally, exploring the hustleconomy has been an enlightening experience for the author. This is largely owing to the fact that she, herself is a hustler, and her path into understanding the obstacles that hustlers confront and how to overcome them is a profoundly personal one. As this is a topic that the author is passionate about, she had to set aside her preconceived beliefs in order to investigate honestly and thoroughly. Thus, the author bracketed her opinions and perceptions at the onset of the research. Although the author learned so much from this research, the author is also cognizant of the fact that this is just the beginning. This research only opens up the door, there is still so much more to explore and discover about the hustleconomy and the hustlers that engage in hustlenomics. Thus, there is still so much ground to cover for Hustlenomics, the study of the hustleconomy.

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## APPENDIX A

## IRB Approval Notice

Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

## NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: March 28, 2022

Protocol Investigator Name: Folasade Onadeko

Protocol # 21-10-1664

Project Title: Hustlenomics

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Folasade Onadeko:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irt](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irt).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair cc: Mrs. Katy Carr,

Assistant Provost for Research

## APPENDIX B

## Recruitment Script

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Dear [Name],

My name is Sade Onadeko and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a qualitative research study examining the undercurrents within the hustleconomy and the best practices and strategies employed by successful hustlers that are engage in the hustleconomy and you are invited to participate in the study.

If you agree, you are invited to participate in a zoom interview to discuss your thoughts, perspectives, and lived experiences as an influencer hustler and how you attained success within the hustleconomy. The interview is anticipated to take no more than an hour. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. Confidentiality will be maintained using a series of security measures, including password protected email communication using university firewall protections, a password protected zoom meeting, deidentification of data using pseudonyms as well as compartmentalization of the various data elements, keeping all information separate. If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me at [Folasade.onadeko@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Folasade.onadeko@pepperdine.edu) or via 510 409 3771.

Thank you for your participation,

Sade Onadeko

Pepperdine University| Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Doctoral Candidate

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## APPENDIX C

## Informed Consent Form

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**IRB #: 21-10-1664**

**Formal Study Title: Hustlenomics: Liberation Through the Hustleconomy**

**Authorized Study Personnel:**

Principal Investigator: Folashade Onadeko,  
100846298,  
Folasade.onadeko@pepperdine.edu.

**Key Information:**

**If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:**

- (Males and Females) between the ages of (18-80)
- Procedures will include (Contacting participants using the recruitment script, informed consent, data collection via structured interview, transcription of data, analysis of data, documentation of findings)
- One virtual visit is required
- This visit will take 60 minutes total
- There is minimal risk associated with this study
- You will not be paid any amount of money for your participation
- You will be provided a copy of this consent form

**Invitation**

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

### **Why are you being asked to be in this research study?**

You are being asked to be in this study because you are an influencer within the hustleconomy industry that is 18 years of age or older and meet the following criteria:

- must an influencer hustler
- must earn income in the hustleconomy
- can be located and contacted via social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, Spotify and YouTube
- must have multiple gigs or hustle
- must be an influencer with over 50,000 followers on your social media platform
- must seek financial liberation through the hustleconomy
- must be an influencer hustler based in Nigeria or USA
- must assent to be recorded.

### **What is the reason for doing this research study?**

The purpose of this study is to develop a roadmap to success for hustlers engaged in the hustle economy. This will be based on strategies and best practices that are identified as essential in leading hustlers towards success within the hustle economy. Little is known about the hustle economy because it has been relegated as the economy of emerging market economies and the economy of the poor. Accordingly, sectors of society such as governments and their agencies and the academic community have not studied, engendered suitable policies, and allocated the appropriate resources, infrastructure, systems etc. that hustlers need to thrive. As a consequence, hustlers have had to overcome numerous challenges and barriers that impedes them from operating at their fullest potential and thus limiting their productivity and success. This circumstance does not only impact the hustle economy but society as a whole because hustlers are limited in their contribution to the economy.

For this reason, the objective of this study is to contribute to the knowledge base of the dynamics within the hustle economy in order to begin to reframe how hustlers and the hustle economy is perceived. This will contribute to scholarly knowledge which will spur further research and provide government agencies with the information needed to begin to develop

policies, resources, infrastructure, systems etc. that will not only mitigate the challenges and barriers that hustlers face when entering and engaging in the hustle economy, but it will also enable hustlers to attain a greater chance to succeed.

Hustlers that are identified as successful are a valuable resource of information and wisdom regarding how fellow hustlers that are engaged in the hustle economy can also attain success. Hence this study seeks to contribute to scholarly and practitioner knowledge base by seeking wisdom and knowledge from successful hustlers and literature in the quest to contribute insight and understanding of the tools, strategies, and knowledge hustlers must employ in their pursuit for success in the hustle economy.

#### **What will be done during this research study?**

You will be asked to complete a 60 minute semi-structured virtual interview. The PI will ask you a series of questions aimed at figuring out what strategies are used by leaders in your field. While the research will take approximately 26 to 52 weeks, your interview will only take 60 minutes.

#### **How will my data be used?**

Your interview responses will be transcribed, analyzed, and aggregated in order to determine the findings to the established research questions.

#### **What are the possible risks of being in this research study?**

This research presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional and/or psychological distress because the interview involves questions about your leadership practices. You may also experience fatigue, boredom, or anxiety as a result.

#### **What are the possible benefits to you?**

You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this study.



**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

The benefits to society may include better understanding of leadership strategies used within your industry. Other emerging leaders might also benefit from any additional recommendations that are shared through this process.

**What are the alternatives to being in this research study?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. There are no alternatives to participating, other than deciding to not participate.

**What will participating in this research study cost you?**

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?**

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

**What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?**

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

**How will information about you be protected?**

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be deidentified and stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and until the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

**What are your rights as a research subject?**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

*For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.*

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305

Email: [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu)

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

**Documentation of informed consent**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Participant**

**Name:**

(First, Last: Please Print)

**Participant**

**Signature:**

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Signature

Date

## Interview Protocol

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1. **Fundamentals of the interview.** I will confirm your information such as your name, the time and location of the interview, and the length of the conversation in advance.
2. **Introduction.** I will spend some time welcoming you and also go over the details of the interview.
3. **First question.** During this time, I will discuss the Informed Consent form with you. I will confirm your consent in order to commence recording and connect the recording devices. I will also go over the amount and the contents of the interview questions as well as the estimated length of the interview. The interview will be semi-structured and if you have any extra questions, you will be able to present them at the end of the interview.
4. **Interview questions.** I will ask the interview questions. I will actively listen to you and during the interview, I will jot down notes or ruminate on observations and learnings during the interview.
5. **Probes.** Because the interview questions are open-ended, I will probe when it's appropriate for additional lucidity and comprehension.
6. **Instructions for concluding.** You will be appreciated for your time, participation, and honesty. During this time, I will also assure you of your confidentiality and you will also get the chance to present any last-minute queries.