

Hustle Kingdom, Hook-up Culture and the Psychology of Generation-Z in Asaba, Delta State

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Abstract

The study investigates the role of psychology in understanding the emerging youth ethic among Generation Z in Delta State, Nigeria with a particular focus on two cultural patterns: Hustle Kingdom (HK) and Hookup culture (HUC). These behaviours marked an urgent drive for rapid financial independence and emotionally detached relationships are reshaping the psychological development, identity formation and career outlook of Nigerian youth. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from a stratified sample of 900 participants, aged 15 to 26 years ($M=21.3$, $SD=3.6$), drawn from public senior secondary schools and universities. Findings revealed a high level of involvement in Hustle Kingdom ($M=3.12$, $SD=0.79$). A statistically significant positive correlation was found between HK and career motivation ($r=0.42$, $p<0.01$), while HUC was negatively correlated with psychological well-being ($r= -0.38$, $p<0.01$). Independent t -tests showed that undergraduates displaced significantly stronger, work values than secondary schools students ($t=9.84$, $p<0.001$). Multiple regression analysis indicated that HK and HUC jointly predicted psychological well-being ($R^2 =0.32$, $f(2, 897) =44.57$, $p<0.001$), with HK contributing positively ($\beta=0.26$, $p<0.001$) and HUC contributing negatively ($\beta = -0.35$, $p<0.001$). These findings suggest that while Hustle kingdom may enhance motivation and resilience unchecked involvement in Hookup culture may undermine emotional stability. The study concludes that a holistic psychological perspective – drawing from developmental, social, clinical and industrial/organizational psychology is necessary for designing interventions that promote balanced youth development and sustainable career planning.

Keywords: Hustle Kingdom, Hookup Culture, Generation Z

Introduction

The 21st – century Nigerian youth is navigating a rapidly changing socio-economic and cultural environment shaped by digital transformation, high unemployment, shifting value systems and intense peer influence. For members of Generation z – those born approximately between 1997 and 2021 – traditional models of career building and romantic relationships are increasingly being replaced by new cultural patterns such as Hustle Kingdom (HK) and Hook-up Culture (HUC)

Hustle Kingdom represents the growing pressure among young people to achieve financial success quickly, often through unconventional or informal means such as social media monetization, digital entrepreneurship, crypto-currency trading or freelance hustles. This trend is fueled by economic instability, peer comparison and the widespread glorification of ‘overnight success’ stories on digital platforms. While it reflects creativity and self-reliance, it can also encourage unrealistic expectations, anxiety and burnout.

In parallel, Hook-up Culture – characterized by casual, emotionally detached and sometimes transactional sexual or romantic encounters – is gaining prominence among Nigerian youth, particularly in secondary and tertiary institutions. Exposure to social media, unstable job prospects and shifting moral values contribute to the normalization of this lifestyle. Although some perceive it as a form of freedom from traditional relationship structures, evidence suggests it can negatively impact psychological well-being and increasingly risks of anxiety, low self-esteem and weakened interpersonal trust.

However, from a psychological perspective, these cultural shifts demand urgent academic attention. Previous studies have largely addressed youth hustling and hookup behaviours from sociological or public health angles, but there remains limited research examining their implications for psychological development, mental health and career orientation. Psychology as a discipline – through its various branches such as developmental psychology, social psychology, clinical psychology and industrial/organizational psychology, offers important insights into how young people construct meaning, cope with pressures and form life values in response to these phenomena.

This study therefore, explores Hustle kingdom and Hookup culture among Generation Z in Delta state, Nigeria, with an emphasis on how psychology can explain their motivations, challenges and outcomes. Particular attention is given to how these behaviours influence career motivation, work values, emotional stability and overall psychological well-being. The study contributes to both academic literature and practical interventions aimed at guiding Nigerian youth toward balanced personal relational and professional development.

Statement of the problem

The evolving behaviours of Generation Z in Nigeria, particularly the rise of Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture, present complex psychological challenges. Increasing numbers of youth in Delta State are adopting informal hustling practices and casual sexual or romantic relationships as normalized lifestyle choices, influenced by economic hardship, pervasive social media exposure and declining trust in formal education and employment.

While, Hustle kingdom is often celebrated for fostering independence and creativity, it can also cultivate unrealistic financial expectations and burnout. Hookup Culture though

sometimes perceived as liberating is associated with diminished emotional well-being, anxiety and low self-esteem.

Despite their growing prevalence, little is known about the psychological implications of these culture patterns for Nigerian youth (Tade & Aliyu, 2011; Ojedokun & Balogun, 2015; Akinwale, 2019; Nwoye, 2017). Research is especially lacking in how these behaviours influence motivation, identity development, career orientation and overall mental health. Without evidence – based insights, interventions by psychologists, educators, counselors and policymakers risk being inadequate or misdirected.

This study therefore investigates the psychological and career –related effects of Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture among Generation Z youth in Delta State.

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of psychology in understanding the impact of Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture on psychosocial and career development of Generation Z in Delta State, Nigeria,

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Assess the prevalence of Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture among Generation Z youth in Delta State.
2. Determine the relationship between involvement in Hustle kingdom and Career motivation.
3. Examine the influence of Hookup Culture on the psychological well-being of young people.
4. Investigate gender and educational level differences in engagement with Hustle kingdom and Hookup Culture.
5. Explore how Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture jointly predict psychological well-being.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between Hustle Kingdom and career motivation among Generation Z students in Delta State.

H2: There is a significant negative relationship between Hookup Culture and psychological well-being among Generation Z students in Delta State.

H3 : There is a significant gender difference in involvement with Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture among Generation Z students in Delta State.

H4: There are significant educational-level differences between secondary school students and university undergraduates in Hustling Kingdom and Career Motivation among Generation Z students in Delta State

H5: Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture will significantly predict psychological well-being among Generation Z youth.

Literature Review

The Concept of Generation Z in Nigeria.

Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1997 and 2012, is a unique demographic characterized by their digital nativity, economic instability, and continual cultural redefinition. This generation has grown up with mobile technologies and social media, which influence their views on opportunities and identity (Alruthaya et al., 2021). In Nigeria, these global trends interact with local challenges, including high youth unemployment and inadequate institutional support, complicating traditional life paths (Omoju et al., 2023). Consequently, Nigerian Gen Z faces a clash between cultural expectations, such as stable careers and conservative relationship norms, and modern realities marked by economic volatility and pervasive digital interaction. Unlike older generations who value linear career progression, Gen Z is adapting to a fragmented job market that necessitates flexibility and adaptability.

Empirical studies highlight this shift towards digital entrepreneurship. Nigerian Gen Z members increasingly utilize technology for economic opportunities, engaging in content creation and informal digital markets, driven by both innovation and necessity (Amaobi Anukam & Otakwu, 2025). Many also pursue a hybrid income generation strategy, combining traditional employment with side hustles and freelancing, reflecting a shift from reliance on a single career path to a more diversified approach (Peters, 2025). This transformation underscores a larger socio-cultural trend where digital influences change aspirations towards autonomy, personal branding, and quick financial gain, while ongoing economic challenges lead to nontraditional work patterns serving as survival mechanisms and expressions of individuality.

Understanding Hustle Kingdom (HK)

The term “Hustle Kingdom” refers to the intense drive among youth to attain financial independence rapidly, often through informal or digital ventures. Examples include social media monetization, crypto trading, online retailing and freelance work. Scholars argue that HK reflects creativity, resilience and adaptability (Olatunji, 2020; Eze, 2022). However, it may also promote short-term thinking, anxiety and disillusionment when expectations fail to materialize. From a psychological standpoint, HK can be seen through the coping strategies and identity formation.

Hustle Kingdom and Work Ethic:

Nigerian youth culture is increasingly defined by digital and entrepreneurial hustling. According to Okonkwo and Obasi (2023), many young Nigerians equate self-worth with financial success and online visibility, often sidelining structured career development. While HK enhances innovation and independence, it can also distort intrinsic work values and fuel stress. From an industrial /Organizational psychology perspective, this shift may affect and job satisfaction leading to possible burnout (Yusuf & Adeyemi, 2022)

Hookup Culture and Youth Relationships.

Hookup Culture (HUC) is characterized by casual, emotionally detached and sometimes transactional romantic or sexual encounters. Studies in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, show a rise in this behavior, particularly among university students (Umeh & Ijeoma, 2021; Bakare & Oluwabunmi, 2023). Motivations range from peer validation and curiosity to financial incentives. However, psychological research links HUC to increased

risks of low self-esteem, anxiety, loneliness and diminished emotional well-being (Akinyemi, 2022). Thus, while it may reflect autonomy, it often comes with long term psychosocial costs.

Career Orientation and Motivation in Gen Z

Generation Z's career orientation is heavily shaped by digital exposure and entrepreneurial aspirations rather than conventional job stability. Scholars note that while many Gen Z individuals are ambitious and creative, their career pathways often lack structure due to conflicting societal expectations (Oluruntoba, 2024).

Unlike previous age cohorts, Gen Z individuals are socialized within a digitally saturated environment that normalizes visibility, rapid wealth acquisition, and entrepreneurial experimentation. In Nigeria and similar contexts, social media platforms amplify narratives of "success" that are often detached from formal education or institutional career pathways. Adeniyi (2021) and Okeke & Mbah (2020) suggest that exposure to luxury consumption and influencer culture, reconfigure career aspirations towards short-term financial gain and autonomy.

This aligns with elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which posits that career interests are shaped by self-efficacy and outcome expectations. For many Gen Z individuals, repeated exposure to visible, high-reward outcomes (even when illicit or ambiguous) re-calibrates perceived viable career options.

Collectivism, Individualism, and Value Tension

Traditionally, African societies have been grounded in collectivist orientations, where career choices are embedded within family expectations, social responsibility, and communal advancement. However, recent studies (Adeniyi, 2021; Nwoye, 2017) indicate a gradual shift toward hybridized value systems. Gen Z are increasingly negotiating between the influence of : Collectivist pressures (fulfilling parental expectations, and maintaining social reputation) and Emerging individualism (prioritizing personal autonomy). The weakening regulatory force of collectivism, it would seem, is creating an avenue for unconventional or deviant economic behaviors to emerge. The gap between culturally defined success goals (wealth, status) and legitimate means of achieving them increases the likelihood of alternative adaptations. And for Gen Z, motivation it will seem, is becoming less about "career identity" in a traditional sense and more about income strategy selection that favour short-term gain.

Link to Hustle Kingdom and Hookup mentality

Within this socio-economic and cultural context, the rise of hustle kingdom and hookup behaviour can be interpreted not simply as moral decline, but as adaptive responses within a constrained opportunity structure. Indigenous and regional studies (e.g., Ojedokun & Eraye, 2012; Tade & Aliyu, 2011) on cybercrime in Nigeria highlight key motivational drivers: Economic survival and upward mobility, Peer validation and status competition, Symbolic resistance to perceived systemic inequality, which are reinforced by digital ecosystems that provide technical access (e.g., tutorials, peer networks), normalize and glamorize outcomes (luxury lifestyles, social recognition) and reduce perceived risk through anonymity.

Similarly, transactional sexual economies are often linked to what some African gender scholars describe as “consumption-driven relationships” (e.g., Hunter, 2002; Mojola, 2014), where intimacy is intertwined with economic exchange. This is amplified by: Social media validation cultures, and limited legitimate income opportunities.

Analyzing the literature reveals that digital exposure alters aspirations and norms, while diminished collectivist control weakens traditional moral and career guidance. Incomplete individualistic systems fail to ensure equitable opportunities, as economic pressure shifts focus towards immediate income. This transition alters career orientation into a flexible, risk-oriented strategy, emphasizing that motivation is contextually driven. When legitimate career paths appear hindered, alternative and riskier options gain psychological and social acceptance. Industrial/organizational psychology further highlights the need for guidance in building sustainable career plans and avoiding career fragmentation (Onuoha & Emeka, 2020).

Psychological Well-Being and Socio-Cultural Pressures.

The psychological strain faced by Nigerian youth is compounded by economic instability, societal pressure to succeed and unstable relationship patterns. Studies have linked these stressors to depression, anxiety and emotional exhaustion (Adewale, 2021; Yusuf & Adeyemi, 2022). Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture serve as both coping mechanisms and sources of stress, making it crucial to examine their dual role. General psychology provides tools for understanding emotional regulation, resilience and identity crises, while industrial/organizational psychology offer insights into how these pressures shape work values and future employability.

The combination of rapidly changing relational standards, sociocultural expectations, and economic precariousness is the best explanation for the psychological stress experienced by Nigerian youth. Uncertainty about the future is heightened by persistent unemployment and underemployment, which are well-documented by the National Bureau of Statistics. Perceived failure is amplified when these benchmarks are not met due to deeply ingrained cultural expectations regarding financial success, family support, and social mobility (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Indigenous research (e.g., Adewale, 2021; Yusuf & Adeyemi, 2022; Akinwale, 2019) regularly connects these intersecting stressors to elevated levels of emotional weariness, anxiety, and depression in young people. Crucially, pain is socially mediated as well as individual; failing to "make it" has relational repercussions like lowered family status and heightened peer comparison (Akinwale, 2019).

In this context, hookup culture and Hustle Kingdom serve as both maladaptive and adaptive coping mechanisms. Income production, perceived control, and social validation, on the one hand, offer instant psychological comfort, which is consistent with psychological coping frameworks that prioritize short-term emotion regulation under stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, indigenous research on juvenile coping and deviant economies (Ojedokun & Balogun, 2015; Tade & Aliyu, 2011) indicates that moral conflict, fear of exposure, unstable income sources, and fragmented identity development are common ways in which these pathways repeat stress. This dual role illustrates a cyclical pattern: participation in these economies sustains or intensifies psychological distress, yet stress drives engagement.

Theoretically, this falls under the category of Identity Crisis, where young people find it difficult to reconcile conflicting identities (provider, achiever, moral agent, and social performer) in a setting with few acceptable options (Erikson, 1968; Nwoye, 2017). Resilience

is more influenced by improvised survival techniques than by solid support networks, and emotional control becomes reactive rather than developmental (Nwoye, 2017).

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive survey design, situated within a quantitative, non-experimental research framework and grounded in positivist/post-positivist paradigms, to systematically describe the characteristics and perceptions of the target population. The design philosophy is grounded in positivist and post-positivist design theories as well as survey research methodology.

The positivist theory posits that authentic knowledge is derived solely from objective observation, empirical evidence, and scientific reasoning.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to explore the influence of Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture on Career orientation, identity and psychological well-being among Generation Z youth in Delta State. The target population consisted of 1123 drawn from public senior secondary schools and three public universities located in the Delta North senatorial zone of Nigeria. This age group was chosen because it represents a critical developmental period where a young people make important decisions regarding identity, career pathways and interpersonal relationships. A sample of 900 participants aged 15 to 26 years ($M=21.3$, $SD=3.6$) was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The sample was stratified by gender and educational level (secondary vs university) to ensure representation across groups. Both male and female students were included, reflecting the diversity of youth experiences in the region.

Data were collected using standardized and researcher developed instruments designed to measure Hustle Kingdom orientation, Hookup Culture involvement. Career motivation and psychological well-being. A pilot test with 30 students confirmed acceptable reliability across all scales (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.71$).

1. Hustle Kingdom Orientation Scale (HKOS): A researcher-developed instrument adapted from entrepreneurial mindset framework (e.g., McGrath & MacMillan, 2000) items assessed the intensity of financial drive, preference for unconventional work pathways and attitudes toward risk taking.
2. Hookup Culture Involvement Scale (HCIS): Adapted from validated measures of casual relationship behavior, this scale assessed frequency, motivations and emotional detachment in hookup experiences.
3. Career Motivation Scale (CMS) ; A modified version of existing scales measuring achievement motivation and goal orientation (e.g., Elliot & Church 1997), tailored to reflect the career aspirations of Nigerian youth.
4. Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS): Adapted from Ryff's Psychological Well-Being framework (Ryff's, 1989), focusing on self-acceptance, autonomy, interpersonal relationships and emotional stability.

Method of Data Collection

Trained research assistants administered the questionnaires in classroom and lecture hall settings after obtaining permission from school and university authorities. Participation was voluntary and all responses were collected anonymously to ensure openness and honesty. The study adhered to standard ethical guidelines in psychological research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and for respondents under 18 years; consent was also sought from school authorities or guardians. Participants were assured of confidentiality anonymity and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. No identifying personal information was collected and data were used strictly for academic purposes.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25). Descriptive Statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequencies) was then used to determine levels of involvement in Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture. Afterwards, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to test relationships between variables (HK, HUC, motivation and well-being). The Independent samples t-tests was used to examine gender and educational-level differences. Finally, Multiple Regression Analysis was used to determine the joint predictive power of Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture on psychological well-being.

Results.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (Means & SDs for all variables)

Variable	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Hustle Kingdom (HK)	900	3.1	0.8
Hookup Culture (HUC)	900	2.7	0.8
Career Motivation	900	3.4	0.6
Psychological Well-Being	900	3.1	0.7

Table 2: Correlation Matrix (Testing H01 and H02)

H01: There is a significant positive relationship between Hustle Kingdom and career motivation among Generation Z students in Delta State.

H02: There is a significant negative relationship between Hookup Culture and psychological well-being among Generation Z students in Delta State.

Table 3: Independent sample t-test (Gender)

Hypothesis 3 (H03): There is a significant gender difference in involvement with Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture among Generation Z students in Delta State.

Variable	Gender	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	p-value
Hustle Kingdom	Male	3.3	0.8	6.45	.000
-	Female	3.0	0.8	-	-
Hookup Culture	Male	2.9	0.8	5.19	.000
-	Female	2.6	0.9	-	-

Table 4: independent sample t-test Results by Educational Level.

There are significant educational-level differences between secondary school students and university undergraduates in Hustling Kingdom and Career Motivation among Generation Z students in Delta State

Variable	Group	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	p-value
Hustle Kingdom (HK)	Secondary Students	2.9	0.8	9.84	.000
	University Students	3.3	0.8	-	-
Career Motivation	Secondary Students	3.2	0.7	8.56	.000
	University	3.6	0.7	-	-

Table 5a: Model Summary of Regression (Testing H05)

H05: Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture will significantly predict psychological well-being among Generation Z youth.

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig
1	0.57	0.32	0.32	44.57	000

Interpretation: the regression model is statistically significant ($F(2,697)=44.57, p<.001$) and explains about 32.3% of the variance ($R^2 =.323, Adjusted R^2 =.323, Adjusted R^2=.322$) in psychological well-being. The small difference between R^2 and Adjusted R^2 is expected due to the large sample size and the use of only two predictive.

Table 5b: Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Psychological Well-being.

Predictor	B (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Hustle Kingdom	0.26	6.78	.000
Hookup Culture	.035	.9.42	.000

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal the dual impact of Hustle kingdom (HK) on Nigerian youth, particularly Generation Z in Delta State. The high involvement in HK demonstrates the cultural reorientation of young people towards financial independence, creativity and entrepreneurial ambition. From a psychology perspective, this aligns with theories of achievement motivation and self-determination, as youth seek autonomy, competence and recognition in nontraditional ways. Industrial/Organizational also sheds light on how HK may influence future work values, organizational commitment and employability.

On the other hand, Hookup Culture was significantly negatively correlated with psychological well-being, reflecting emotional risks such as low self-esteem, anxiety and relational instability. From the standpoint of social and clinical psychology, these findings highlight the vulnerability of youth to socio-cultural pressures that normalize emotionally detached and transactional relationships.

Gender and educational-level differences further emphasize the role of societal expectations and developmental factors. Male students' greater involvement in HK reflects cultural pressure on men to provide and succeed, while female participation in HUC may be shaped by both social validation and financial motivations. University students' stronger motivation compared to secondary students can be explained by their closer proximity to adulthood responsibilities and career transitions.

Together, the results show that while HK contributes positively to motivation and well-being, HUC undermines emotional stability. The paradox reflects the complexity of youth culture: a combination of resilience and vulnerability that requires balanced psychological interventions.

Conclusion

This study explored Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture as emerging cultural patterns among Generation Z in Delta State, Nigeria, through the lens of psychology. Findings reveal that HK foster motivation and resilience, while HUC is strongly associated with diminished psychological well-being. Both phenomena jointly predict youth outcomes, underscoring the need for holistic interventions.

Psychology, as a discipline, provides critical tools for understanding these dynamics developmental, social, clinical and industrial/organizational psychology perspectives together highlight how youth navigate identity, work values and relationships in a rapidly changing society.

The study concludes that interventions must balance the empowering aspects of HK with safeguards against the emotional risks of HUC to foster healthier and more sustainable youth development.

Implications of the study

The findings enhance the psychological literature on youth behavior by illustrating the interplay between motivational factors and well-being in developing economies. These insights can assist counselors, educators, and psychologists in creating interventions focused on financial ambitions and relational health. Additionally, policymakers can establish youth initiatives that foster entrepreneurship and career development alongside mental health

support. The study suggests the necessity for longitudinal and comparative research to better understand the evolution of key concepts across different regions and cultures.

It is recommended that educational institutions incorporate structured counseling and entrepreneurship training to aid youths in Hustle Kingdom with career development. Psychologists are advised to create specific intervention programs to tackle stress and emotional issues related to Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture. Additionally, government policies should focus on youth-friendly employment schemes, particularly in digital entrepreneurship, to mitigate risky hustling. Families and community leaders should enhance mentorship and value reorientation programs for healthier life choices. Researchers are encouraged to broaden the study's scope to include different regions and use longitudinal designs to better understand the long-term psychological impacts of Hustle Kingdom and Hookup Culture.

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