
**HUSTLE AND GIG
STRUGGLING AND
SURVIVING IN THE
SHARING ECONOMY**

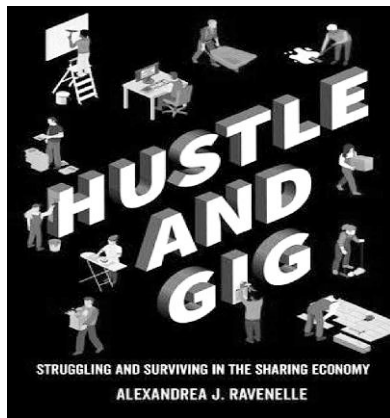
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Recently, the rise of new era workforce 'sharing economy or the gig workers', has gained a lot of attention. The workers have been under the scanner for a variety of reasons starting from the issue of taxation to the exploitation of this rising class. This type of work has become an attractive option of the 'new age entrepreneurs' who do not like being managed and prefer being their own boss. Such rise of workers has questioned current management practices and retention of full time workers by firms. In her book, *Hustle and Gig*, the author Alexandra J.

Ravenelle tries to capture the essence of this apparently freedom filled type of work and introduces the readers to the not so happy aspect of such jobs in the market. The author narrates the personal accounts of about eighty workers working in the gig economy from sites like Kitchensurfing, Uber, Airbnb and TaskRabbit. She elaborates how the seemingly independent work has its quirks and such employment is actually bound by algorithms and task completion pressure. Quoting famous economists Lawrence F. Katz and Alan B. Krueger, the author emphasizes that platform based job creation accounted for about 0.5 percent of all workers in 2015 and needed much more attention on issues that the workers face. Her analysis of this issue takes an interview-based approach and is the only existing book in the market right now which recounts real life experiences of such workers.

Her narration spans three types of gig workers, the ones who have succeeded to achieve the kind of life they envisioned by entering the gig economy, the ones who are struggling to remain economically stable and finally the ones who are using the gig economy framework to earn some extra money along with their full time work. Using these categories, she analyses not only the economic costs and benefits

but also how such work has affected the society and if policy intervention is required to save the grace before the probable rise of labour issue movement.

The book is divided into 8 chapters. The first chapter sets the flavor of the book and what one can expect in the coming chapters. She gives a glimpse of excerpts from the various interviews the author had conducted. The author argues that the big promises by the gig economy is not matched by the actual experiences of the workers in this economy. The ease and access of getting a job does not ensure safety and mental peace after all. She even comments how this entire new economy is like going back to era when workers were not protected and labour issues and revolution surfaced as a result.

Since the gig economy is still relatively a new concept, the author therefore uses the second chapter to explain the depths and know hows of this economy and focuses on elaborating on the four online platforms included in her sample frame. The chapter discusses the demography of this new workforce and the patterns of recruitment for these sites.

In the next two chapters, the author discusses the issue of occupational hazards these workers have to face. Ravenelle observes from the interviews that

these workers are often left hapless in case an accident or a hazard occurs while completing the task assigned to them. The author condemns how this type of economy lacks any sort of responsibility towards these workers and cause a massive case of potential exploitation at the work place that is usually avoided when one is working in a protected environment like a full time job in a firm.

This theme is also extended to the fifth chapter of the book. This chapter however focuses on the harassment aspect of these sort of jobs. Many such workers who deliver services at the sight of the employment face challenges of being harassed physically or mentally by the employer of the task.

The author then discusses about the legalities of these gig jobs in the sixth chapter. As although these tasks are creating rapid employment, some of these assigned works through the platform, sharing apps may not fall under the legal purview for example delivery of substances which are not usually available in the public markets. Such jobs although openly advertised through these online platforms may lead to many of such scams which are surfacing in the media currently.

Her seventh chapter takes a more economics based approach wherein the author talks about how possessing specialized skills and capital gives an individual to make it big in the gig economy. Comparing the thriving and barely surviving gig workers, the author sees skills and capital as an important factor for succeeding in this new age internet economy.

In the concluding chapter, the book looks into the gig economy from the employers side. The author interviews service leaders in the field of the gig economy and discusses the issues of living wage payment and providing basic benefits to their workers which is currently missing in this economy. The author then attempts to suggest policy recommendations on how to ease the pressure and challenges experienced by the new age sharing economy workers so that more success stories emerge from this revolution rather than mere struggling survivors.

The book as a whole picks up the age old debate between the enhancing community project versus a thriving capitalistic society. It emphasizes how making it big through small entrepreneurship has its own challenges and anyone willing to enter this industry of freedom should be prepared for the dark

side as well. This industry is currently underpaid and has no social security for unforeseen circumstances.

The book is a good read for two types of readers, for the ones who are willing to contribute their capital and skills to the gig economy and succeed by starting as a small entrepreneur. It is also a good read for the ones who feel analyzing the gig workers only by numbers is a good enough reason for believing that the gig economy is helping the society. The book has a socialistic approach to an economic aspect of the labour market. Although this piece of work is based on interviews of the gig workers in America, however it provides food for thought for policy makers across the world considering that the gig workers in their country could face the same ordeal. After reading the book, the reader is left pondering on a very important issue one should focus on before it gets too late and we are back to the era of 19th century labour movement experienced during the industrial revolution.

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