

Burnout: The Societal Contract of a Techno-Reliant Society

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INTRODUCTION

The Institute for Social Research (ISR) under the Applied Sociology Program at Dixie State University (DSU) has developed a definition that describes burnout as an institutional problem with systematic symptoms.

- Burnout: Performing social contract obligation(s) while operationally exhausted either physically and or mentally.
- Operationally Exhausted: An individual's successful social action under continued mental and/physical strain.
- Social Contract: The societal norms, values and cultural expectations that are accepted by an individual in order to act within a given institution of society.

There are six predictors of burnout identified by a Gallup poll

- Unfair treatment at work
- Unmanageable workload
- Lack of role clarity
- Lack of support,
- Lack of communication
- Unreasonable time pressure.

This research explores burnout as part of the societal contract for a techno-reliant society.

Discussion

People now live in a techno-reliant, being dependent on technology, society with information moving faster than ever before. This reliance on the internet, a backbone of human communication in this new social contract.

Individuals within techno-reliant societies are confronted with multiple complex realities, and are tasked to understand and successfully navigate ever expanding new realities that are developed by a techno reliant culture.

In Plato's *Crito*, an imprisoned Socrates discusses his theory of Social Contract. The sacrifice of freedoms to gain access to the benefits and protections of the state. This contract is taught throughout institutions of a society. Education is the transference of norms, values, and cultural expectations for success. Robert Merton's Strain Theory discusses this concept further as goals and success are defined socially. Conformity to the methods are the freedoms an individual gives up to gain those goals.

These social actions, defined by Max Weber, are the social contract that individuals accept in order to take part in society. The resulting exchange of individuals with societal institutions and their supporting organizations, leads to burnout, one of the sacrifices a person accepts to achieve their own success in this techno reliant society.

Burnout is often whimsically discussed as something one "Grits" through, but according to a Forbes article by Karlyn Borysenko, there is a financial cost, between **\$125 billion and \$190 billion every year**. The concept of burnout is not new, but because it is not understood, there is a negative effect on individuals that have been taught and accepted burnout in this techno reliant society.

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