

Module 3: Harmony in Family & Society (Human–Human Relationship)

Topic: Understanding Trust – Intention vs Competence

Introduction

In the context of human relationships, especially in families and society, **trust** forms the foundation of emotional and functional harmony. However, trust is not a vague concept—it has specific dimensions. In this chapter, we explore **two critical components of trust: Intention and Competence**. Recognizing the difference between the two helps us understand, build, and repair relationships more effectively. This understanding is essential for engineering students as they prepare to work in collaborative teams and engage responsibly with society.

3.1 What is Trust?

Trust is the firm belief in the **reliability, truth, ability, or strength** of someone. In human relationships, trust is about **believing that the other person means well (intention) and is capable of fulfilling responsibilities (competence)**.

Trust enhances emotional safety, allows open communication, and builds long-term relationships based on mutual respect and understanding.

3.2 Two Dimensions of Trust: Intention vs Competence

3.2.1 Intention

- **Definition:** Intention refers to the *motive, attitude, or purpose* behind a person's action.
- It is related to a person's **feelings of goodwill, care, and concern** for others.
- **Positive intention** is when someone genuinely wants to support or help, even if they fail to do so effectively.
- **Example:**
 - A parent who gives career advice with care, though outdated, still has positive intention.
 - A friend who tries to help in studies but lacks deep subject knowledge still means well.

Key Point: If a person has the *right intention* but lacks the required skill or knowledge, we may feel hurt or frustrated, but the bond of trust often remains intact.

3.2.2 Competence

- **Definition:** Competence refers to a person's *ability, skill, or capacity* to perform a task or fulfill a role.
- It relates to one's **technical knowledge, experience, and practical application**.
- A person may have the best of intentions, but if they lack competence, the outcomes may still be poor.
- **Example:**
 - A new team member in a project might genuinely want to contribute but lacks coding experience.
 - A well-meaning teacher may not be able to explain concepts effectively.

Key Point: When a person is **competent** but **lacks good intention** (e.g., selfish motives), trust is severely broken.

3.3 How Trust is Built and Lost

Situation	Intention	Competence	Trust Outcome
High Intention + High Competence	✓	✓	Strong Trust
High Intention + Low Competence	✓	✗	Partial Trust / Empathy
Low Intention + High Competence	✗	✓	Distrust / Suspicion
Low Intention + Low Competence	✗	✗	No Trust / Rejection

- Trust is **built over time** when people repeatedly demonstrate **positive intention and consistent competence**.
 - Trust is **broken quickly** when people show **lack of care (bad intention)** or repeatedly fail due to **incompetence**, even if intentions were good.
-

3.4 Importance of Trust in Family and Society

- **In Families:**
 - Trust helps in **emotional bonding** between parents and children, siblings, and spouses.
 - It reduces misunderstandings and encourages **open communication**.
 - For example, a parent trusting a child to choose their career path can empower the child.
- **In Society:**
 - Trust is the **social glue** that binds individuals and communities.
 - It is critical for **collaborative functioning**, such as in workplaces, governance, healthcare, and education.

- When trust exists, people can delegate, cooperate, and function peacefully.
-

3.5 Restoring Broken Trust

If trust is broken due to either **poor competence** or **negative intentions**, it can be rebuilt by:

1. **Acknowledging the gap** – Accepting what went wrong.
 2. **Clarifying intentions** – Communicating genuinely.
 3. **Improving competence** – Learning or seeking help to perform better.
 4. **Consistent actions** – Repeated demonstration of trustworthiness.
-

3.6 Engineering Perspective: Trust in Teams and Projects

- In engineering, **trust between team members** determines success.
 - A team member with good intentions but low competence must **seek training or support**, not hide weaknesses.
 - A highly skilled but self-centered member can damage **team morale**.
 - Hence, engineers must work on **both competence (skill)** and **intention (attitude)**.
-

Summary

- **Trust** in human relationships is rooted in both **intention** (why someone acts) and **competence** (how well they act).
 - **Intention** reflects care and goodwill, while **competence** reflects skills and execution.
 - Strong relationships require **both**.
 - In families and society, trust encourages emotional security, cooperation, and development.
 - In engineering and professional life, trust is critical for team efficiency, leadership, and sustainable success.
 - By developing **positive intention** and **improving competence**, individuals contribute to a **harmonious society and professional environment**.
-