



Received: 06-09-2023  
Accepted: 16-10-2023

## International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

### Emotional Sharing Skills with Orphans among Social Workers at Social Protection Centers in Vietnam

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#### Abstract

Child protection and care is always a fundamental activity in the development strategy of every country. The care and protection of children in general, and children in special circumstances in particular, are always identified by our State as a key task in investing in social development. Vietnam currently has over 400 social protection centers, with the number of people in need of assistance from social work services accounting for about 40% of the population. Up to now, the whole country has about 235,000 people working in social work, including over 35,000 civil servants, officials, and workers working in the field of social work. However, the social work force still has some shortcomings in terms of quantity, capacity, and lack of skills, resulting in a lack of professionalism in their activities. Orphaned

children belong to the group of children with particularly difficult circumstances, suffering from emotional deprivation. This requires social workers need to have skills, especially in emotional sharing, advocacy skills, relationship building skills, and skills to help children integrate into the community... This article showed the current situation of emotional sharing skills with orphaned children by social workers working at social protection centers in Vietnam (Birla Children's Village Hanoi, SOS Children's Village Hanoi, SOS Children's Village Viet Tri). From there, recommendations are made to improve the emotional sharing skills of social workers with orphaned children in Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Emotional Sharing Skills, Social Workers, Orphans

#### 1. Problem Statement

Protecting and caring for children is always a fundamental activity in the development strategy of every country. No civilized and progressive country neglects the care of children. Because, children today are the world of tomorrow, investing in children is also investing in the development of society.

Social work is an applied science field aimed at training professional social workers who work directly with individuals, groups, and communities in need, especially vulnerable individuals, groups, or communities, including children.

Social work with children is part of the sustainable development strategy of society. To do this job well, one of the important factors is that social workers need to have knowledge, experience, and professional skills.

Orphaned, homeless, and abandoned children are cases where children do not receive the care and education of their families and guardians. Orphaned children always crave affection, often seeking support from those around them, and have a need to share their emotions with social workers and staff in the village.

In this article, we address the current situation of the skill of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers at various centers.

#### 2. Some Theoretical Issues on the Skill of Sharing Emotions with Orphaned Children by Social Workers

##### Concept of Skill

Until now, psychology has different concepts of skill:

Skill is the technical aspect of an operation, action, or activity. Representing this concept are authors such as V.A. Crucheski, A.G. C vali v, Tran Trong Thuy. In the book "Personal Psychology," A.G. C vali v also sees "Skill as the method of performing actions that are appropriate to the purpose and conditions of the action" <sup>[1]</sup>. When discussing skills, Tran Trong Thuy also states that "Skill is the technical aspect of action. Humans understand how to act - that is, they have the technical

skills" [2].

Skill is the individual's capacity for action in activities. Representing this viewpoint are authors such as N.D. Levitov, K.K. Platonov, A.V. Petrôvski, Vu Dung (2000) [3], Nguyen Quang Uan (2005), Tran Quoc Thanh (1992), Hoang Thi Anh (1992). According to them, skill is the capacity of a person to perform a task with results under new conditions, within a corresponding timeframe. Considering skill as the capacity for action of an individual requires us to not only analyze the technical aspect of the action but also study other personality factors related to action implementation [3].

Skill is the behavior of the individual. According to J.N. Richard (2003), skill is the behavior that manifests in external actions and is influenced by the individual's perception and thinking [4].

In our opinion, skill is the application of knowledge and experience to carry out activities effectively.

### Concept of Social Worker

According to the International Association of Professional Social Workers (IASW), a social worker is defined as "a person who is trained and equipped with knowledge and skills in social work. They have the task of assisting individuals in enhancing their problem-solving and coping abilities in life, creating opportunities for individuals to access necessary resources, promoting interaction between individuals and the environment, and aiming at social policies, agencies, and organizations for the benefit of individuals, families, groups, and communities through research and practical activities" [5].

Social workers work in agencies within the labor and social system, work in hospitals in the healthcare industry, work in schools in the education sector, work in courts in the justice sector, work in social and socio-political organizations... and work with various vulnerable groups such as the poor, people with disabilities, children with special circumstances, people affected by HIV/AIDS, victims of trafficking and violence [6].

### Concept of Orphaned Children

Article 40 of the Law on Protection, Care, and Education of Children of Vietnam in 2004 states: "Orphaned children are children under 16 years old who have lost both parents or have been abandoned, lost their means of support, and do not have any close blood relatives (grandparents; legal foster parents, siblings) to rely on. Orphaned children also include children under 16 years old who have lost either their father or mother but the remaining parent (mother or father) is missing according to the provisions of the Civil Code or does not have the capacity or ability to support them (such as severe disabilities, serving a prison sentence, or without means of support and no close relatives to rely on)" [7].

### Concept of the Skill of Sharing Emotions with Orphaned Children by Social Workers

In our opinion, the skill of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers is the application of experience, knowledge, professional skills, and a professional attitude to understand, and perceive the needs and emotions of children, and provide feedback to help children have positive emotions.

The expressions of the skill of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers include:

- Listening and respecting the emotions and beliefs of children
- Using understandable, familiar, and appropriate language
- Acknowledging the values, trust, and thoughts of children even if they do not align with personal views
- Encouraging children to share their own experiences
- Trusting in the ability to change behavior and irrational thinking in children
- Accepting internal thoughts and outward behaviors of children
- Paying attention to the inner emotions of children
- Using words, gestures, and eye contact to provide timely encouragement and praise
- Encouraging and supporting children when they have limitations (shyness, difficulty looking or hearing...)
- Respecting the opinions of children.

### 3. Methodology

To study the current situation of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers, we used a system of research methods including: Document and literature research method; Expert method; Observation method; Survey method using questionnaires; In-depth interview method, and mathematical statistics method.

We designed a self-assessment scale for social workers on their skills of sharing emotions with orphaned children using the Likert scale, including evaluation criteria and scoring as follows:

#### + Level of full implementation:

- Very complete: 5 points
- Complete: 4 points
- Relatively complete: 3 points
- Incomplete: 2 points
- Don't know how: 1 point

#### + Level of proficiency:

- Very proficient: 5 points
- Proficient: 4 points
- Relatively proficient: 3 points
- Still awkward: 2 points
- Very awkward: 1 point

#### + Level of flexibility:

- Fully applicable: 5 points
- Applicable: 4 points
- Partially applicable: 3 points
- Difficult to apply: 2 points
- Not applicable: 1 point

Overall assessment of the level of skills in sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers

- Level 1 - Very weak: 1-1.99 points
- Level 2 - Poor: 2-2.99 points
- Level 3 - Average: 3-3.99 points
- Level 4 - Good: 4-4.99 points
- Level 5 - Very good: 5 points

The research subjects included 94 social workers who are working directly with orphaned children and 57 orphaned children at 3 social protection centers (Birla Children's Village Hanoi; SOS Children's Village Hanoi; SOS Children's Village Viet Tri).

**4. Research Results about Current Situation of Sharing Emotions with Orphaned Children by Social Workers**

***Level of Sharing Emotions with Orphaned Children by Social Workers***

Research results show that the level of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers is at an average level (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Level of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers (N=94)

Emotion sharing skills	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Level</b>
	3.88	0.40	Normal

Specific expressions of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Specific expressions of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers (N=94)

<i>Expressions</i>	<i>Completeness</i>		<i>Proficiency</i>		<i>Flexibility</i>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Knowing how to listen and respect the emotions and beliefs of children	3.95	0.70	3.78	0.67	3.98	0.71
2. Knowing how to use understandable, familiar, and appropriate language	3.97	0.72	3.87	0.72	3.87	0.73
3. Knowing how to acknowledge the values, trust, and thoughts of children even if they do not align with personal views	3.60	0.62	3.50	0.73	3.64	0.74
4. Knowing how to encourage children to share their own experiences	4.05	0.76	3.99	0.66	3.98	0.77
5. Knowing how to trust in the ability to change behavior and irrational thinking in children	3.76	0.63	3.53	0.69	3.65	0.69
6. Knowing how to accept the internal thoughts and outward behaviors of children	3.94	0.70	3.80	0.68	3.73	0.75
7. Knowing how to pay attention to the inner emotions of children	3.97	0.74	3.85	0.74	3.79	0.77
8. Knowing how to use words, gestures, and eye contact to provide timely encouragement and praise	4.11	0.75	3.97	0.75	3.95	0.82
9. Knowing how to encourage and support children when they have limitations (shyness, difficulty looking or hearing...)	4.14	0.59	3.88	0.68	3.93	0.82
10. Knowing how to respect the opinions of children	4.26	0.73	4.10	0.71	4.09	0.74
<b>Overall level</b>	<b>3.97</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>0.44</b>

(The highest score is 5 and the lowest score is 1)

The data in Table 2 shows:

The level of sharing emotions with orphaned children by social workers is average in terms of completeness, proficiency, and flexibility (mean = 3.97, 3.82, and 3.85,

respectively). The highest level of completeness in sharing emotions with orphaned children is observed in social workers.

The best expression of sharing emotions with orphaned children is social workers "respecting the opinions of the children," followed by "encouraging and supporting when children have limitations (shyness, difficulty looking, difficulty hearing...)" and "knowing how to use words, gestures, and timely praise to encourage."

However, expressions such as "recognizing the value, trust, and thoughts of children even if they do not align with personal views" and "believing in the ability to change unreasonable behavior and thoughts in children" are not fully, proficiently, and flexibly demonstrated by social workers.

Children in orphanages all carry the common pain of lacking the love and affection of their parents, and each child has their own life story. Some children, from the moment they are born, do not get to know their parents, while others witness the departure of their loved ones. Some children have parents who are still alive but suffering from serious illnesses (HIV infection), and there are even children whose parents are no longer alive... This pain is always present in each child. Although society now pays great attention to these children, and as the country develops, more and more people engage in charity work and come to help them materially, no matter how abundant the material resources are, they cannot fill the void in the hearts of these children who always yearn for affection.

Orphaned children often have negative emotions and can express their depression through apparent signs of apathy or lack of interest in normal activities. Depression can also be the result of negative thoughts, including negative self-perception, negative interpretations of personal experiences, and negative perspectives on the future. Some children, especially boys, express their feelings through outward-directed behaviors and may become aggressive. Girls often express their emotions through inward-directed behaviors, worrying or becoming anxious. Orphaned children have difficulty expressing their emotions in words, possibly due to being overwhelmed by their own emotions and wanting to suppress them, or because they have never been encouraged to speak about themselves and do not have enough words to express their feelings. Due to the lack of emotional support, these children seek support from the people around them, especially social workers and staff at the orphanage. All children have the need and desire to share their emotions, to be understood, loved, and trusted by others.

Through observation, we found that social workers in the centers/villages for children tend to listen more than speak and spend more time allowing children to express themselves. They know how to use simple and age-appropriate ways to receive children, showing friendliness and openness. They respond to children's emotions and thoughts with appropriate language, attitude, and behavior. They show care, encouragement, and timely inquiries when children appear sad or lack concentration. They avoid making strong criticisms, condemnations, blaming, or opposing the unusual views, thoughts, and behaviors of children.

***Compare the Level of Emotional Sharing Skills with Orphans among Social Workers in Children's Villages***

**Table 3:** Emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers in children's villages in children's villages (N=94)

Criteria	Units	Quantity	Mean	SD	p
Completeness	Birla Children's Village Hanoi	30	4.02	0.38	0.03
	SOS Children's Village Viet Tri	34	4.07	0.42	
	SOS Children's Village Hanoi	30	3.81	0.44	
Proficiency	Birla Children's Village Hanoi	30	3.86	0.36	0.72
	SOS Children's Village Viet Tri	34	3.84	0.49	
	SOS Children's Village Hanoi	30	3.77	0.47	
Flexibility	Birla Children's Village Hanoi	30	3.80	0.41	0.51
	SOS Children's Village Viet Tri	34	3.92	0.51	
	SOS Children's Village Hanoi	30	3.83	0.40	
Overall level	Birla Children's Village Hanoi	30	3.89	0.36	0.37
	SOS Children's Village Viet Tri	34	3.94	0.43	
	SOS Children's Village Hanoi	30	3.80	0.40	

(The highest score is 5 and the lowest score is 1)

According to the research results, overall, there is no significant difference in the level of emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers in different centers/villages, and this difference is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

However, analyzing specific indicators and criteria, it is shown that there is a significant and statistically significant difference in the level of completeness of emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers in different centers. Social workers in SOS Children's Village Viet Tri and Birla Children's Village Hanoi demonstrate a higher level of completeness in emotional sharing skills with orphans, "Knowing how to listen, respect every emotion, and perspective of the child"; "Knowing how to use language that is easy to understand, friendly, and appropriate for the child" compared to social workers in SOS Children's Village Hanoi (mean=4.07 and 4.02 compared to 3.81) with  $p = 0.003$  (Table 3).

**Compare the Level of Emotional Sharing Skills with Orphans among Social Workers Based on Years of Experience**

**Table 4:** Emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers based on years of experience (N=94)

Criteria	Years of experience	Quantity	Mean	SD	p
Completeness	Under 5 years	30	3.90	0.42	0.17
	5-10 years	31	3.91	0.43	
	Over 10 years	33	4.08	0.41	
Proficiency	Under 5 years	30	3.69	0.39	0.05
	5-10 years	31	3.80	0.44	
	Over 10 years	33	3.96	0.47	
Flexibility	Under 5 years	30	3.76	0.40	0.17
	5-10 years	31	3.83	0.43	
	Over 10 years	33	3.96	0.48	
Overall level	Under 5 years	30	3.78	0.37	0.08
	5-10 years	31	3.85	0.39	
	Over 10 years	33	4.00	0.42	

(The highest score is 5 and the lowest score is 1)

The data in Table 4 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers based on years of experience ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Analyzing specific indicators and criteria, it is shown that there is a significant and statistically significant difference in the level of proficiency in emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers with different years of experience. Social workers with longer years of experience

have a higher level of proficiency in emotional sharing skills with orphans compared to younger social workers (mean=3.96 and 3.80 compared to 3.69) with  $p = 0.05$ .

**The Correlation between Factors Influencing Emotional Sharing Skills with Orphans among Social Workers**

The research results show a strong positive correlation between emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers and professional attitude ( $r = 0.443$  and  $p = 0.001$ ), professional knowledge ( $r = 0.479$  and  $p = 0.001$ ), training process ( $r = 0.341$  and  $p = 0.001$ ), and practical conditions ( $r = 0.477$  and  $p = 0.001$ ).

**5. Conclusion**

Emotional sharing skills are one of the personal social work skills. The research findings show that the level of emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers in different centers/villages is at an average level. Professional attitude, professional knowledge, training process, and practical conditions are factors that influence emotional sharing skills with orphans among social workers in current child care centers/villages.

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