

## Spiritual Self-construction of Peer Educators in a Family Context: A Narrative Study

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### Abstract

The aim of this qualitative study, which used narrative methodology, was to understand the spiritual self through the construction of peer educators in the family context. The foundation theory of spiritual self-construction, symbolic interaction theory, and role-taking principles are combined with the concept of spirituality derived from the review and synthesis of the counseling psychology research field. The data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with five peer educators, all of whom are substance abusers, and then thematically analyzed. The findings revealed four patterns of building a spiritual self: 1) a son following religious principles within a family of religious faith; 2) a father being good to small children; 3) a husband trying to quit drugs with his wife's unconditional love, and 4) the virtues of the father resulting in a moral son. These studies demonstrate how substance abusers can create spiritual selves through faith and awareness of the value and meaning of life. These spiritual resources assist substance abusers in dealing with adversity in their lives. Furthermore, they will serve as a guideline for future drug addiction prevention and treatment interventions.

**Keywords:** substance users, spiritual, self-construction, family context, narrative, symbolic interaction

### Introduction

The drug pandemic in Thailand is likely to increase as a consequence of drug traffickers lowering drug costs, resulting in a rise in demand for

drug usage in the nation. According to data from the drug treatment system for the year 2021, there are 155,500 drug users who have entered the system; the proportion of new substance abusers is 70.34 %, not including the very large number of substance abusers who have not yet entered the system; and the majority of them are between the ages of 25 and 29 (89.66 %). The drug with the highest prevalence is amphetamines at 79.2%, followed by ice at 8.3%, marijuana at 4.4%, and heroin at 3.4% (Office of the Narcotics Control Board, 2021). Not only will the health of drug addicts worsen, but society typically shuns and rejects them (Lee and Boeri, 2017). In Thailand, the majority of substance abusers who are stigmatized and discriminated against are those who have completed high school or higher (Jaisan, Thepthien, and Hongkraitert, 2018). Furthermore, even in the field of healing and rehabilitation, therapists and caregivers have stigmatized patients (Yang, Wong, Grivel, and Hasin, 2017). Negative stigma applied to substance abusers were also associated with negative feelings and treatment perceptions (Crapanzano et al., 2019). The social stigma and prejudice toward drug abusers are associated with poor physical and mental health as well (Ahern, Stuber, and Galea, 2007).

Peer educators are defined as former or current substance abusers who live in areas where intravenous drug use has caused an HIV pandemic. They are chosen by the For Our Friends Foundation (pseudonym)<sup>1</sup> and trained in the knowledge and understanding of health issues and drug abuse so that they can assist substance abusers in their community. The peer educator provides peer support for drug users to enhance quality of life without fear of discrimination. They talk to substance abusers about HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C, and other diseases that can be spread through sexual contact (Medley, Kennedy, O'Reilly, and Sweat, 2009). They also provide drug users with clean

<sup>1</sup> A non-profit organization whose mission is to reduce the number of people affected by and harmed by intravenous drug use (IDU), as well as to improve the quality of life of drug users so that they have access to effective and equitable health, social, and drug treatment services, and to reduce new infections (HIV). Peer educators play a critical role in "finding" and "accessing" new intravenous drug users in the community. The organization conducts activities in 19 provinces in the northern, central, and northwestern regions, as well as the southern region, where there are concerns regarding the frequency of infection among drug users. All these places were chosen based on the results of epidemiological research and are accredited by UNAIDS, UNODC, and WHO.

protective equipment like condoms and sterile needle devices, and if the drug abuser consents, they will transport them to hospitals or treatment centers to be tested for HIV given access to methadone therapy. Due to the illegality of drugs and the stigmatization by society, substance abusers do not try to use any health services if they are not forced. Peer educators are thus essential for building trust and encouraging substance abusers to use health services. Through their own experiences with substance abuse, peer educators understand why substance abusers conceal and avoid others in the community. In general, drug users believe that society would prefer to punish and stigmatize them rather than provide them opportunities or compassion. But this perception exacerbates the social problem, especially by drug users sharing needles which spread germs. This study uses the experiences of peer educators to show how substance abusers can spiritually self-construct.<sup>2</sup> It is believed that the insights discovered may reduce society's bias toward drug users.

The research method of narrative study encourages people to tell their story; it gains in-depth data, participants are willing to reveal accountable self-reflection and truth, leading to the provision of a voice for participants (Havanon, 2013; Ntinda, 2019). The story of substance abusers is often about crime and violence. The narrative study in this research, on the other hand, is a reflection of the good side of substance abusers full of positive energy built from the family, which is important and related to the individual's spiritual growth (Prasertsuk, 2015; Walsh, 2012; Willow, Tobin, and Toner, 2009).

The spiritual selves of these substance abusers help them cope with the difficulties of abstinence, the health consequences of substance abuse, and other life challenges brought on by addiction. As a result, the goal of the study is to learn more about how peer educators develop spiritual selves. The findings point to novel approaches in broadening

society's perceptions of substance abusers in general, as well as among mental health professionals. Furthermore, this discovery has the potential to foster and establish patterns of connection between individuals and their families, thereby assisting them in developing their spiritual selves further.

### **Objective**

This study aims to understand the spiritual self-construction of peer educators in the family context.

### **Literature Review**

According to the theory of symbolic interaction, socialization constructs the "Self" - individuals that interact with those who play different roles in different social circumstances. The mind, which is active rather than passive, is in charge of taking in and remembering how a person interacts with people in society, then reflecting that back on the self by assuming the position or role that society anticipates. For instance, when peer educators interact with their families, their minds will perceive and then choose to remember images or symbols with significant meaning; they will then reflect on or look at themselves, and they will next take on a role (father, son, employer) that their mind's past function calls "self" (Alver and Caglar, 2015; Blumer, 1969; Yanyongkasemsook, 2013).

The researchers used counseling psychology research synthesis to discover the three characteristics of the spiritual self, which are consciousness, faith, and belief, in addition to the discovery of the meaning and value of life (Cashwell, Bentley, and Bee, 2007;; Dobmeier and Reine, 2012; Janesawang, 2012; Larsen, 2012; Myer, 2012; Myer and Kirk 2003; Green, Benschhoff, and Harris-Fobes, 2001; Saengsakorn, 2012; Shaw, Bayne and Lorelle 2012; Sukcharoen, Sakunpong, and Sripa, 2020a; Sukcharoen, Sakunpong, and Sripa, 2020b; Young, Wiggins-Frame, and Cashwell, 2004). The study of the self is formed from the family context because social institutions are the foundation of people in society and the starting point for the accumulated soul in

<sup>2</sup> Spiritual self-construct is producing inner potential through interactions and roles in society; that individuals are characterized by the inner drive to discover the meaning of life, values, love, awareness, and the development of one's potential; commitment to responsibility; working tirelessly in the face of obstacles and problems; harmonious relationships with others; and living for the public good. It may also be associated with supernatural forces or religious relics (Choorat, 2018).

the individual where the self absorbs the expression and reaction within the family context and this can be reflected in the individual's spirit (Willow, Tobin, and Toner. 2009).

As a consequence of this process, the self-image of peer educators who have had similar experiences is often portrayed as inappropriate or undesirable. This perceived image leads to an attempt to change oneself in order to recover from being a drug addict and thus achieve the socially expected self. Learning to lead oneself by taking on roles, whether they are those of children, husbands, or fathers, is a process that occurs in the individual and creates the attributes of being a spiritual person; that is, one who has consciousness, belief, faith, and discovers the meaning and value of life. The following illustration explains the concepts discussed above.

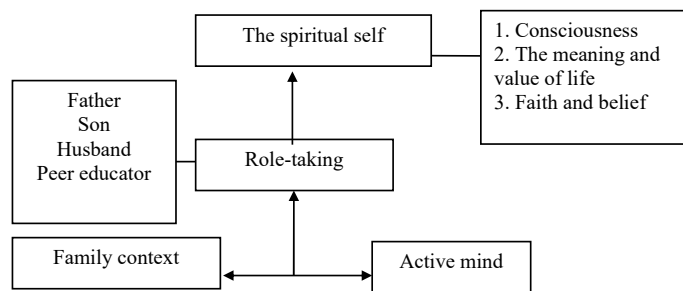


Figure 1 Research theoretical framework

## Methods

In this study, the narrative study method was used, which is based on the theory of symbolic interaction and role-taking.<sup>3</sup> The emphasis is on

<sup>3</sup> Role taking is the capacity to imagine another person's perspective, and how one is viewed by others. Role taking encompasses one's ability to imagine another person's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, desires, and intentions, even if these are different from one's own (Uzefovsky and Baron-Cohen, 2019). Roles in the context of the family can, on the one hand, be described by concrete examples such as father, son, husband, etc. A role comprises a set of patterns of behavior, rights, and duties that are temporarily assigned to various persons. The role that one assumes is dependent on the context of the social setting and varies across societies. So, a list of expectations is made and shared with the person who takes on the role (Herrmann and Jahnke, 2012).

understanding spiritual self-construction phenomena arising from interactions in the family context through stories of peer educators playing related roles. The data were gathered through dialogue between the researcher, who played a theoretical questioning role, and the peer educator, who shared their life experiences. The stories were then interpreted and analyzed using the thematic analysis method, which is appropriate for this methodology because it focuses on the content of spiritual self-constructs, and each discovery will be based on at least one informant's extensive experience. Thus, one narrator's insights can reflect phenomena that occur in multiple dimensions. Furthermore, it is assumed that the narrative was written from the researcher's point of view whose identity is prominently displayed (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2011; Havanon, 2013; Riessman, 2008; Rodell, 2013).

## Participants and Setting

The informants for this study were chosen using two methods: 1. Purposive sampling: information providers must have been peer educators with at least one year of experience and a history of difficult drug addiction. They must have self-control and be able to manage themselves to maintain a normal emotional state if they are still using drugs or receiving therapy. These credentials are scrutinized by compassionate and investigative officers who work alongside to mentor them. 2. Theoretical sampling: the researcher selects peer educators with experience in constructing self-spirituality based on symbolic interaction theory, role-taking, and spirituality traits. Gender was not restricted in this research, but since the peer educators in the research area were all male, the key informants were all male as well. Finally, there were five key informants who work as peer educators for the For Our Friends Foundation (pseudonym), a social development organization that supervises and supports peer education work in the three southern border provinces, where the way of life is rooted in religion and family, both of which are linked to spirituality, and where exists a high drug prevalence as well.

### Data Collection

The researcher conducted a participatory semi-structured in-depth interview that lasted 0.45 to 2.00 hours. Interviews were conducted in a conversational format based on the basic concept of a narrative study. They were scheduled based on whether or not the saturation was deemed complete using symbolic interaction theory, as well as spiritual characteristics discovered in each of the peer educator roles, which must have clearly projected the phenomenon of spiritual creation. Furthermore, each role had at least one peer educator agent who could clearly narrate the spiritual person's creation. Example question 1. Tell me about your life path to becoming a drug user. 2. Who comprises your family and describe each member's attitude toward your drug use 3. What life events were influenced by your conscious mind, strong faith, and meaning of life, and what role did family members take.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data in this study. The results of the interviews between researchers and peer educators were interpreted, and the interview questions were aligned with the study's aims and conceptual framework. Eight steps were included in the data analysis: 1. Record every word of the interview in writing. 2. Listen to the recording to ensure its accuracy and check it against the corresponding transcript. 3. Edit and remove the narrator's name and location from the interview information that could be used to link the interview to the contributor's identity. 4. Practice grouping and categorizing the main ideas from each story. 5. Insert the message into the code to find the main point based on multiple readings and reviews of the code text. 6. List all of the information in chronological order in relation to the main points. Each entry is classified based on the type of content. 7. Interpret and connect the relationships of sub-issues to support the defined main issues. 8. Summarize the body of knowledge to gain an understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Chantavanich, 2010; Havanon, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Traimongkon and Chatraporm, 2010).

### Trustworthiness

Based on Loh's approach (2013), this narrative research focuses on building knowledge about spiritual self-construction that should reflect verisimilitude or adequately illustrate the situation as if the researcher participated in the study event or story, as well as identify the subject's specific utility traits important to them. As a result, the researcher could employ the following methods for verifying the data: 1. Member check: the researcher presents the results to two peer educators for verification and additional comments. 2. Peer verification: One expert with experience in qualitative research using the narrative method reviewed the data and provided comments and corrections at each stage of the data creation process (Juthavantana, Sakunpong, Prasertsin, Charupheng, and Lau, 2021). User evaluation: Two field officers of the foundation serving as mentors to the peer educators read the analysis and provide additional feedback. As a result, at least one informant with strong reflective insights was used in the study to support the findings.

### Ethical Considerations

On April 4, 2018, the Institutional Review Board of Srinakharinwirot University (SWUEC/X-299/2560) authorized this study. Furthermore, the researchers were well aware that the data gathered using the narrative study approach could have exposed personal and confidential information about the informants. In addition, the study's major informants were vulnerable people, such as substance addicts or HIV-positive individuals stigmatized by society. As a result, the informants' anonymity and confidentiality were well preserved throughout the research (Phothisitita, 2008).

### Results and Discussion

#### Demographic Information of Key Informants

The demographic presentation consists of two sections: 1. Demographics of the informant as a whole and 2. Information related to the path of substance usage by the key informants.

Section 1: Key informant demographic information as a whole. The participants’ demographic information includes their gender, age, marital status, religion, job history, peer educator working experience, and current status as a substance abuser. These are shown in the table below.

**Table 1** Key informant demographic information

<b>Gender</b>	Male	5
<b>Age</b>	35-40 Years old	3
	41-50 Years old	2
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	3
	Separated/ Divorced	2
<b>Children</b>	Yes	2
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhist	3
	Islamic	2
<b>Peer educator working experience</b>	< 1year	1
	> 1year < 5 years	2
	> 5 years	2
<b>Current status as a substance abuser</b>	Using	3
	Recovering	2

The peer educators’ demographics are as follows: there are five males, three of whom are 35-40 years old and two of whom are 40-50 years old. Three of them are married or cohabiting, while the other two are divorced or separated. Three of the peer educators are Buddhists, while the other two are Muslims. There are two peer educators who are parents. One peer educator worked for less than a year as a peer educator, two for more than a year but less than five years, and two for more than five years. Only two peer educators are currently undergoing substance abuse rehabilitation.

These data reflect the role of the peer educators who will be the subjects of the study, specifically the roles of the child, the father, the husband, and a religious person. In addition, the role of a peer educator, which, despite having the same role as another participant, may have different spiritual self-concentrations.

Section 2: The following material pertains to substance abuse pathways, the age at which substance use began, substances used, substance addiction, methods for drug addiction recovery, and the health impacts of drug use in the past. These are shown in the table below.

**Table 2** Paths of peer educators’ substance abuse

Name (Pseudonym)	Age		Drugs and addiction beginnings	Substance used	Substance addicted	Methods for drug addiction recovery	Effects of past drug use on health
	First substance use	Present					
<b>Lew</b>	16	45	Marijuana usage when working as a musician in a band	Marijuana, ICE Heroin Alcohol	Heroin	Stop using the drug abruptly	Emotional control
<b>Zabit</b>	17	41	Smoking marijuana, then using heroin, persuaded by friends during high school	Marijuana Heroin	Heroin	Stop using the drug abruptly	Infected with HIV
<b>Shakir</b>	19	35	Marijuana , then heroin use while working together with fishermen	Marijuana Heroin	Heroin	Methadone Therapy (in process)	Infected with HIV
<b>Muhammad</b>	24	43	Alcohol and marijuana usage while working together with fishermen	Marijuana Heroin Alcohol	Alcohol	Stop using the drug abruptly	Slower cognitive processes
<b>Nat</b>	15	43	Trying cannabis, then heroin with friends during high school	Marijuana Heroin Alcohol	Heroin	Methadone therapy (in process)	Infected with hepatitis C virus

When peer educators started their drug use, both early adolescents (Lew and Nat) and early adults were present. It often started with tobacco, such as cigarettes or marijuana, and developed into heroin use. Companionship led to drug dependence, especially among fishermen in an area where marijuana and heroin were prevalent. Although drinking is prohibited in Islamic society, Muhammad’s case

found that he was addicted to alcohol while working as a fisherman, in the military, and at tourist attractions. When he returned to the Islamic community, he quickly gave up alcohol since the community leader had cautioned him with good intentions. The most problematic and addictive substance among peer educators is heroin, which is typically addressed with methadone replacement treatment, while two peer educators stopped using by themselves. The health implications of previous drug use, such as HIV and hepatitis C infections from sharing needles, as well as alcohol addiction, will cause the brain to slow down and eventually leads to loss of emotional control.

### **The Patterns of Constructing a Spiritual Self**

The narrative of this study's peer educator spirit self-construct experience is organized into four main themes, each of which is further divided into sub-themes as follows.

#### **1. A son follows religious principles with a family of religious faith**

Individuals' ideas and values are shaped by patterns of interaction in a family with a way of life based on religious principles and rituals. The substance-abusing peer educator observed social norms and reflected on himself, allowing the identity of a religious believer to emerge. The peer educator developed into a 'good follower,' a term that refers to gratitude for people to whom one is indebted, notably one's parents. The manifestation of a worthy follower is to be ordained in honor of the parents and accepting them as spiritual anchors.

1.1 A son goes cold turkey to send his mother to heaven with faith and belief

A person goes cold turkey from drugs to send their mother to heaven. Religious ideas have been passed down generations, while faith and beliefs are based on them. They are the guiding principles that society agrees to follow. It is assumed that a son's ordination in honor of his mother would ensure that she had a happy afterlife. The ordination serves as a thank-you gift. In this instance, a youngster did not become ordained but rather went cold turkey. This deed represented gratitude,

which is a Buddhist ideal. This was proved through Lew's personal experiences:

I once requested to be ordained and informed my mother to sign the request form, but she refused. Why you might wonder? She added, "Just stop doing drugs, and you'll send me to heaven." That is something I remember to this day. I wanted to do it for Mom and make her happy, so I did it. I ended up quitting drugs cold turkey. I was in excruciating pain for around 7-8 days (Lew [Pseudonym], 2018).

#### 1.2 A son's ordination in honor of his father

The Buddhist society created a self that saw ordination as a method of repaying parents' compassion and truly following monastic regulations. Nat's (pseudonym) experiences revealed the significance of his beliefs and faith in obtaining the role of a "good child" resulting in parental appreciation. He had to resist drug addiction for a time, but he was able to complete his aim:

A few years ago, I decided to become ordained as a dedication to King Rama IX and my father before converting my religion from Buddhism to Islam in preparation for remarriage. 'Whatever religion you choose, be devoted and behave,' my father said. But I was only ordained for a short period. While I was a monk, I never used drugs (Nat [Pseudonym], 2018).

#### **2. Being a good father to young children**

Most substance abusers are males, and society expects males to take on the role of 'family pillar'. Substance abusers face the possibility of a deadly infection, such as HIV, which can be transmitted by sharing needles among heroin users. When a substance-abusing father recognized his role and realized the value and meaning of life—to live for his children and family—he was inspired to fight his condition and eventually survive. Furthermore, the opportunity to care for his children on his own allowed the father to accept his parenthood. It gave him a sense of worth and significance. It also motivated him to do good things

for his children and family, such as giving up drugs and working hard to provide for his family.

#### 2.1 A father who resists death for the sake of his children

A father who fights death for his children is determined to prevent his children from knowing their father may die as a result of an HIV infection, leaving them to confront life's obstacles on their own. As a result, the father persisted in the belief he couldn't die, despite the reality that he had a very tiny chance of surviving. The father did not give up and took advantage of every opportunity to be with and care for his children. The experience of Zabit (pseudonym) revealed a strong desire to live for the sake of his children.

It's all because of my children. The family's pillar is me. Who would my child live with if I died? They're still quite young! I suppose I'd need to treat myself if the doctor refused to treat me, but that isn't the case at all... despite the doctor's treatment, I'd still be treating myself! For the rest of my life, I'll have to take medication (Zabit [Pseudonym], 2018).

#### 2.2 A father who is determined to be a good father to his children

After encountering a significant circumstance that served as a life-turning point, a father was able to learn the value and meaning of life. Because he knew why he was born, and what his purpose and ambition were, he accepted his existence and lived a meaningful life. The force that mobilized a meaningful existence grew stronger as a result of this knowledge. For a substance-abusing parent who discovered spiritual fatherhood, he was able to stop abusing substances. The goal of spiritual fatherhood is to be a 'good father' from the moment his child is born. When he learns he is a parent, he assumes the role of the father he is meant to be. Spiritual fatherhood for a substance-abusing father includes concepts such as a father who devotes himself to raising his children and a father who is determined to be a decent person for his children. The defined objectives enable the substance-abusing parent to abstain for the sake of his children. Lew's (pseudonym) experiences of parenting demonstrate the formation of the self with the desire to be a good father.

My children are the center of my universe. We should raise them ourselves because they are our children. I cleaned their excrement, bathed them, and assisted them in getting ready for school. In my previous life as a musician, I had to relocate to the Kabang district and live there for a year to earn money for my school fees, which totaled 27,000 baht. Both of my children attended a private school with just enough for a kindergartener to learn the fundamentals (Lew [Pseudonym], 2018).

### 3. A husband tries to quit drugs with his wife's unconditional love

The family with a wife accepts her husband, who used substances. This acceptance enables him to discover his worth and meaning in life. The result is he goes cold turkey with tenacity for the sake of his family. Even though society stigmatizes people who abuse substances, the wife ignores the myth, shows compassion, and helps her husband. She was always by his side as a confidante with whom he worked out his problems. Shakir's life experiences matches the characteristics of a companion who adds value. Shakir had been free of drugs and alcohol for a long time. After getting married, he had to relocate and was unable to receive methadone maintenance treatment. It led to a relapse into substance misuse. His wife's actions eventually helped him maintain his abstinence.

#### 3.1 A husband who realizes his value through his wife's acceptance without judgment

A wife with a broad mind adds value to her husband by accepting him as he is. Others are able to fully express themselves without casting judgment on their spouse. Both parties gain a deeper understanding of each other's situations and goals. More importantly, such acceptance aids the husband in seeing the value and significance of his existence, leading to behavioral changes and a solution to the problem.

I was taken aback when I learned I had contracted HIV for ten years, there were no signs or symptoms of this illness. On the first test, the CD4 count was extremely high. In the second test,

the CD4 count was low. I was forced to take antiviral medication and got tested for HIV. My wife was well aware of this, and she was in charge of my daily medication. She attempted to persuade me to change my needles regularly, and I gave in. I never anticipated someone would be so ready to help me stop using drugs; she goes out of her way to make everything easier for me (Shakir [Pseudonym], 2018).

### 3.2 A husband who realizes his value through his wife's advice and encouragement

A wife's deeds of giving counsel and encouragement to her husband includes being there for him through thick and thin, being eager to listen and help figure things out, and attempting every feasible solution to help her husband overcome his issues. When the husband admitted to his actions, he adopted the persona of a person with willpower who persisted in coping with life's challenges.

I was desiring something on that particular day. So I rode my bike back and forth to another hospital, hoping to receive methadone, but I couldn't. My wife and I were reunited. She was motivated by sympathy. We discussed it and decided that we would try to quit first. My wife permitted me to take the methadone again when I couldn't because she felt horrible seeing my withdrawal. I had to pull over in the middle of my ride and lay down because I was in pain. She massaged my body to ease my pain. So I decided to abstain because I wanted to do it for her. She inspired me to fight for myself once more (Shakir [Pseudonym], 2018).

## 4. The virtues of the father result in a moral son

When a son grows up in a family where his father strives to do good, the son will strive to do the same. The child absorbs and manifests the social roles he takes on, the ones that society expects, such as working to help others as a peer educator or community member and quitting drugs to make society accept him and make a father proud. This

is the spiritual self that arises from a son's love and faith for his father, making the son's mind eager to observe, remember, learn, and practice especially when reflecting on himself when adopting various societal roles.

### 4.1 A son who thinks well does well as a result of his father's teachings

Since childhood, the interaction between a son and his beloved father, as well as his faith, has made the child's mind eager to learn the symbolism of fatherhood or the role a father plays. The son clearly notices, absorbs, remembers, and internalizes verbal symbols, such as his father's teachings. When he grows up, he becomes a community member or peer educator to help care for the people in the community. The "spiritual self" that arose from the father's faith manifested itself as symbolically consistent behavior for the son.

As an example, Muhammad, 42, is a peer educator who helps reduce the harm that befalls drug users and the community. He reflects on his own personality, specifically on his father's teachings, "Think good, do good, speak good," which he remembers with his heart. And he tries to apply these teachings to work with an awareness of what words have a significant impact on others. This is evident in his work, in addition to saying and doing only positive things. Despite the consequences of his alcoholism which caused him to think and react slightly slower than the average person, they made him aware of the problem of addiction. In his role as a peer educator, he tries to assist other drug users in the community, especially drug users with psychiatric symptoms who are often disregarded and shunned. Muhammad, on the other hand, feels differently; he attempts to listen carefully to mentally ill drug users and aid them in addressing their social problems. Positive thinking and compassion toward drug users build trust and help them feel safe and secure. Muhammed eventually becomes dependent on the community's mental patients.

My father is a fisherman. Since my father was ten years old, I've been following him. My family was poor, but my father was a good man. I believe my father, who once told me as a



child that everything will be fine if we think and speak well. I believe and try to follow my father's words. I am now caring for a large number of drug users with psychiatric symptoms in the community. Even if they talk ignorantly, I must speak and act positively toward them and always help them (Muhammad [Pseudonym], 2018).

In this case, the virtue and kind words of Shakir's father gave him faith when he was struggling and needed the inspiration to quit using drugs. Such faith fueled the desire to quit, prompting actions such as regularly completing addiction treatment. Furthermore, in the same way that his father devoted himself to society, Shakir was determined to be a peer educator in the community to assist people with substance addiction.

I have respect for my father since his friends trust his remarks. He has a marijuana user as a friend. "You can use it, but you must also look after your family," stated the father. His friend did what he said; he purchased a car and has had a nice life up to this point. The father begged everyone to halt, and several of them heeded his advice and were able to do so (Shakir [Pseudonym], 2018).

#### 4.2 A son trying to quit drugs for a father devoted to him

A father's display of dedication to his son while abusing substances allowed the son to recognize his affection. This was mirrored in the son's strong faith and determination to remain substance-free. For four years, the father had continuously provided care for his substance-abusing child, including monitoring, encouragement, traveling several kilometers to visit his son at the treatment center, and preparing food for his child after methadone maintenance therapy. The boy was compelled to get up every morning to acquire methadone from a location several kilometers away as a result of his father's actions. The son made an effort to look after himself so that he would not disappoint his father as he had in the past. He battled cravings that were sparked multiple times by the environment's issues. The son's faith in

his father's love urged him to overcome his addiction, which was not easy for people who abused substances and lived in an environment that might tempt them back into the vicious cycle of misuse.

My father came to see me the first week, and my body had not changed. I ate a lot and took care of myself by working out in the second week. My body had changed, I appeared healthier, and I had gained weight. My father was overjoyed and visited me weekly. My father's mood changed dramatically after I had treatment, going from desperation to joy, and he cried happy tears (Shakir [Pseudonym], 2018).

The main themes and sub-themes of the study are depicted in the diagram below:

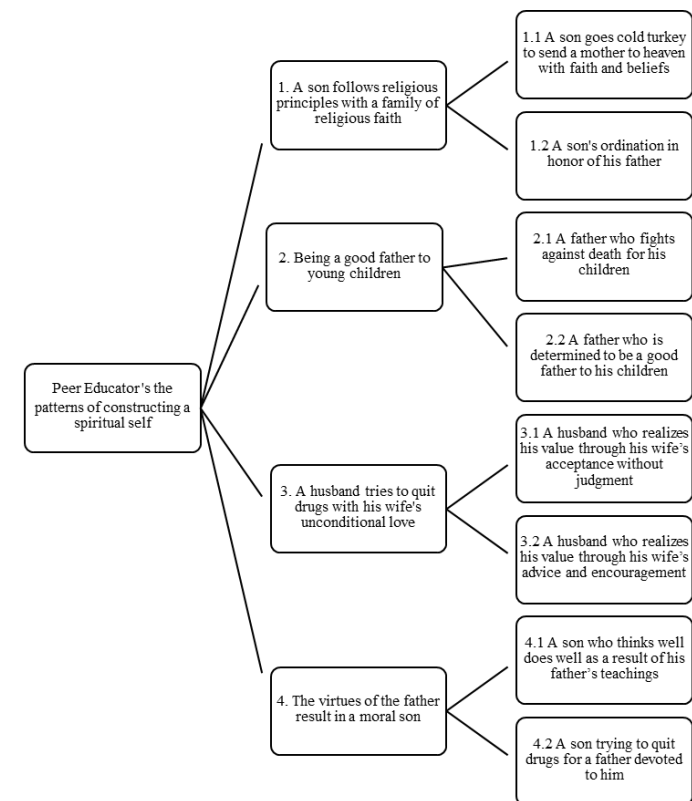


Figure 2 Theme and sub-theme of the findings

## Discussion

The findings of this study were to uncover patterns of spiritual self-construction in the family context of peer educators who have past substance abuse, which is explained according to the theory of symbolic interaction and role-taking approaches. The first is a son's interaction with religion. Devout parents allow the child to form a spiritual self, i.e. the role of the child is to be grateful to the parent in accordance with religious teachings and practices, like the spiritual selves of Lew (pseudonym) and Nat (pseudonym), who both decided to face the difficulties of quitting drugs in order to serve as a good child according to religious traditions. It can be concluded that the importance of the role that parents play in the development of their children's faith is immense. If this foundation is not established correctly, problems might arise later in the child's development (van Niekerk and Breed, 2018). Furthermore, religious ideals instilled in the family shape children's perceptions of themselves as good followers. It forms the self of a 'religious believer' who tries to stay away from drugs to fulfill the role of a decent child following religious beliefs. These sons faced hardships, but religion provided them with hope, which encouraged them to seek out peer educators, and it eventually inspired them to assist others who were experiencing similar issues in overcoming challenges (Dobmeier and Reine, 2012; Larsen, 2012; Shaw, Bayne, and Lorelle, 2012).

Another interesting form of spiritual-constructing interaction is the good father role. The results found that when peer educators interacted with young children and perceived social expectations of the father's role, it led them to establish spiritual identities in terms of discovering values and meaning in their lives. McMahon, Winkel, and Rounsaville (2008) found that when comparing drug abusers' responsible fathering to that of non-abusers, fathers who abused drugs or alcohol were shown to be less responsible in terms of financial resources to support the family. Further liabilities included pair-bonding patterns, procreation patterns, parenting behavior, and emotions of inadequacy that a father might utilize to motivate drug addicts to undergo treatment.

In the case of peer educators, the study's findings revealed that they lacked the financial resources to care for their children, but they could form bonds and strive to be good and spiritual fathers because their children comprise the meaning of their lives, like Lew (Pseudonym) (2018). Also, Zabit (Pseudonym) (2018) who battled HIV/AIDS and barely survived, but quit taking drugs in order to live and be a good father to his children.

The next concept is a pattern of interaction between unconditional love and the selflessness of family members. This motivates drug users to quit abusing. It further explains that if the mind is driven by the urge to work energetically, especially to receive sincere attention, then substance abusers consider their own state and ultimately play the role of a person who is determined to quit abusing drugs and be a respectable person for the family. In this regard, the family is instrumental in supporting substance abusers who are battling and trying to stop drug abuse (Chamrathirong et al., 2010). Furthermore, for people who use substances, especially when they are stressed, the family provides meaning and worth (Saengsakorn, 2012), as well as support when they are in stressful situations (Shaw, Bayne, and Lorelle; Cashwell, Bentley, and Bee, 2007; Dobmeier and Reine, 2012; Janesawang, 2012; Saengsakorn, 2012; Smith, 2006). The positive family relationships encourage peer educators to develop their work-related spiritual selves (King and Koenig, 2009).

Not only do positive family relationship patterns assist peer educators to enhance their work-related spiritual selves (King and Koenig, 2009), but so also does the interaction pattern between a moral parent and drug abusers (a father who sacrifices for society and thinks, says, and does good things). The examples of Shakir (Pseudonym) (2018) and Muhammad (Pseudonym) (2018) clearly demonstrate that their fathers' morality drove them to take on the role of peer educators who are devoted to aid drug abusers in the community. So families can also drive peer educators to have confidence and motivation to work for others (Rodell, 2013).

Finally, to illustrate the interaction pattern between a moral parent and substance abusers, Shakir's (pseudonym) and Muhammad's (pseudonym) cases clearly reflect that faith in their fathers' morals later led them to take on the role of peer educators who are dedicated to assisting drug abusers in the community as well. As a result, families can also drive peer educators to have confidence and motivation to work for others (Rodell, 2013).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, substance users in the role of peer educators have a spiritual presence in the roles of sons, husbands, and fathers. Each role is derived from interactions with the family context, in which there are spiritual and fictional family members who are as dedicated as society expects, such as a father and wife who are devoted to their drug-addicted son and parents who adhere to religious principles, including making their own son the meaning of their life. The peer educators' spirit is stimulated by the spiritual power of the family to actively absorb, learn, and play the roles that society expects.

People who are physically, emotionally, and mentally vulnerable, such as substance abusers, require mental and social rehabilitation. There must be a positive atmosphere with spiritual people nearby. They can build or develop their positive energy through interaction, allowing it to manifest in various social roles. However, if stigma and exclusion are especially prevalent in the therapist, the psychologist or supervisor involved may be unable to effectively supervise, rehabilitate, or reinforce the identity or role of a drug-free person.

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