

# Self-care among military spouses and partners: Developing the Military and Veteran Spouse Self-Care Inventory (2024)

Authored By: Jean Paul Hare, Karie Hare, Elisa Borah, Yessenia Castro, Rachel Ortiz, and Anil Arora

## RESEARCH BRIEF

*Military and Veteran spouses/partners face unique stressors that compromise their well-being, highlighting the need for a validated and concise self-care measurement tool.*

### WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

- **Self-care is essential for enhancing overall wellness**, especially given the unique stressors faced by military spouses and partners.
- Existing **self-care tools are often lengthy and not tailored to the specific needs** of the military community, leading to respondent fatigue.
- A **culturally-appropriate measure** is essential to accurately capture self-care practices in this population.
- A **validated self-care tool** can guide targeted interventions, ultimately improving quality of life among military families.

### WHO WAS INVOLVED AND HOW WAS THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

- **227 military and Veteran spouses/partners** participated through the **Veteran Spouse Resiliency Group (V-SRG)**.
- Participants completed **pre- and post-intervention surveys** both online and in-person between June 2020 and December 2021.
- Researchers **adapted the existing 69-item self-care inventory** and employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to refine the measure into a **15-item tool**.
- Multiple **tests for reliability and validity**—including assessments of construct, convergent, and discriminant validity—were conducted to ensure the tool's robustness.

### WHAT DID WE FIND?

- The **15-item MVSSCI** demonstrated excellent **internal consistency** (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.91$ ) and strong **criterion validity** with the original measure ( $r = 0.95$ ).
- **Convergent validity** was confirmed by a significant positive relationship with perceived quality of life ( $r = 0.60$ ).
- **Discriminant validity** was supported by relatively weak correlations with measures of anxiety, depression, and social support.
- Overall, the **MVSSCI is a feasible, valid, and reliable instrument** for assessing **self-care practices** in this population.

### ACTION STEPS

- **Broaden validation efforts** by including more diverse military spouse demographics, including male partners.
- **Integrate the MVSSCI into routine assessments** within military and Veteran support programs to monitor self-care practices.
- Utilize the tool to **design targeted interventions** that address specific self-care deficits and promote overall wellness.
- Gather **ongoing feedback to continuously refine** the measure and ensure its relevance across various military contexts.

