

# **Work Environment and Psychosocial Factors Affecting Physical Activity Among Workers: A Review of the Literature**

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**Background and Objective:** The WHO stated that workplace health promotion programs, targeting physical activity (PA) are an effective means to prevent chronic diseases and promote health. This paper provides a review of factors influencing worker PA and its application to develop effective intervention programs.

**Methods:** Research articles were identified using bibliographic databases (e.g., Medline, PubMed) and references cited in collected articles. Articles published in English from 1989-2009 that described the relationship among work environment, psychosocial factors, and PA in workers were reviewed.

**Results:** Twenty articles were reviewed. Self-efficacy has been the most widely investigated variable and has consistently correlated positively with PA/exercise. Self-efficacy also served as a mediator between perceived workplace environment and workplace PA. Perceived benefits or pros of PA had significant, small, positive associations with PA/exercise. Perceived barriers to PA/exercise or cons of PA were consistently and negatively correlated with PA/exercise. Perceived workplace environment was weakly, though significantly, associated with leisure-time PA/workplace PA. Subsidies for health club use, on-site exercise facility, paid time for non-work-related PA, and a safe place to walk outside work were positively related to leisure-time PA/work-break PA. As the number/satisfaction scores of workplace policies/environments increased, workers were more likely to meet PA guidelines. The relationships among job strain, job demands, job control, and PA were inconsistent and varied between sexes. While women with active jobs were more likely to be active, men with active jobs demonstrated an opposite effect. Nonetheless, consistently high strain jobs, passive jobs, and low job control were related to lower levels of PA/exercise in both sexes.

**Conclusion:** These findings highlight the need to develop future workplace PA interventions that use randomized controlled trials with significant work environment and psychosocial predictors of PA and valid/reliable measures, and to perform mediation analyses to determine the strength of these potential predictors of PA.