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What's Stopping You? The Relationship Between Barriers, Self-Efficacy, and Physical Activity Levels in Incumbent Deputy Sheriffs

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Incumbent deputy sheriffs tend to be less physically active than recruits, despite the benefits of physical activity (PA) for health and job-related tasks (Orr et al., 2018). To address the barriers to PA in this population, self-efficacy may play a role as it is a key correlate of PA in many populations (Rhodes et al., 2017). However, to our knowledge, SE and specific barriers to PA have not been examined within deputy sheriffs. Therefore, this study explored barriers to PA as well as the role of SE on perceived barrier limitations and PA levels in deputy sheriffs. Sixty deputy sheriffs (Males: $n=48$, Females: $n=12$) from one law enforcement agency completed a cross-sectional survey. PA was assessed using the Godin Leisure Time Exercise Questionnaire (Godin & Shephard, 1985). Barriers to PA were measured using an open-ended questionnaire that asked about perceived barriers and how limiting those barriers were (Gyurcsik et al., 2009). A 6-item measure of SE was used to assess coping and scheduling SE (Rodgers & Sullivan, 2001). Multiple regressions were performed to predict PA (barrier limitation, coping and scheduling SE) and perceived barrier limitations (coping and scheduling SE). The three most common barriers identified were work hours ($n=33$, 55%), family commitments ($n=32$, 53.3%), and lack of time ($n=27$, 45%). Both the regression models were significant in predicting PA ($R^2=.21$, $p=.007$) and perceived barrier limitations ($R^2=.21$, $p=.003$). Scheduling SE was the only predictor of both PA ($\beta=0.33$, $p=.013$) and perceived barrier limitations ($\beta= -0.04$, $p=.015$). Similar to other populations, scheduling SE appears to be important for PA and reducing the perceived limiting nature of barriers among deputy sheriffs. The emergence of scheduling SE may be reflective of managing the most frequent barrier of work hours. Further research should address these barriers and how to improve scheduling SE in deputy sheriffs.

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