

**MOOD VARIATIONS OF ATHLETES INVOLVED IN COLD
WEATHER EXPEDITIONS: A CASE STUDY**

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CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgement 1	i
Acknowledgement 2	ii
Contents page	iii
Abstract	vii
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix

Chapters

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	3
1.2 Research Objectives	4
1.2.1. Research Questions	4
1.3 Significance of Project	5
1.4 Scope of Project	6
1.5 Limitations of Study	6
1.6 Definition of Terms	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	11

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to examine the influence of sleep efficiency on mood variations relative to performance. This is a case study where the researcher, who is also the endurance athlete, was involved in the Antarctic expedition of ski-sailing and trekking from the South Pole to the Hercules Inlet, covering a distance of 1,100 kilometers in 22 days. Three Actiwatches and Mood Scale forms were used daily to collect two sets of data on the researcher's sleep patterns and moods. The first set of data was tabulated during the athlete's training session in Finse, Norway in April 2004 and, the second set was gathered from the athlete's actual expedition in the Antarctic in December 2004. Results indicated that there were neither correlations nor statistically significant relationships between sleep efficiency versus mood variations, and mood variations versus performance. We suggest that future research should investigate efficacy of sleep as applied intervention designed to improve cohesion and mood, relative to an athlete's optimal performance.

Keywords: sleep pattern, mood variation, stress, performance, sports psychology, Antarctic expedition

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The psychology of Antarctic service has a long and distinguished history that extends back to the very first winter-over experience, The Belgica Expedition of 1898-99 (Palinkas, 1986). In his account of that expedition, the great polar explorer and expedition physician, Frederick A. Cook (1909:292) described in vivid detail the melancholy and depression that affected the entire crew, that is, the moods and emotional variations experienced by the crew according included sadness, dejectedness, depressed, and empty enthusiasm. In Malaysia's case, the challenge to excel in an extreme weather environment has always been a dream. Few Malaysians have had the opportunity to set foot on the Antarctic but those who did were usually tourists or invited government officials. In 2002, the Prime Minister then, Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and his entourage were invited to "visit" the Antarctic. Coming back from that exhilarating experience, the Prime Minister threw a challenge to Malaysians who would be willing to live and conduct research in the Antarctic. In order to accept that challenge, Malaysians have to be very prepared to live and work in total isolation and in an extremely cold weather condition. Thus the psychology, mental and emotional aspects of future athletes or researchers heading towards the Antarctic or Arctic would have to be very well conditioned to face the abnormal challenges and unpredictable icy-cold environment.

The field of Antarctic psychology, according to Palinkas (1986) began as a scientific enterprise under the leadership of men such as Eric Gunderson of the United