

WOMEN'S HEALTH ON EXPEDITION

Impact of expedition environment, fitness and expedition type on women's menstrual cycle and well-being.

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Introduction

Adventure and the discovery of the unknown have been part of human culture for centuries. People venture into often unknown terrain under extreme conditions, to the most remote places on earth. Due to the growing percentage of female participants, women's health is becoming an increasingly important factor to consider in today's travel and expedition culture. Amateur female adventurers who participate in expeditions as a form of vacation are an unexplored area of research.

Methods

The survey was carried out between October 2022 and May 2023 and included amateur women adventurers who met the following criteria:

- Stayed three or more nights during the expedition in simple/basic accommodations
- Are postgraduate learners or educators
- Age between 25 and 45 years old

The expeditions were divided into different extreme weather conditions (cold, heat and altitude) and expedition types (polar, desert, mountain and tropical).

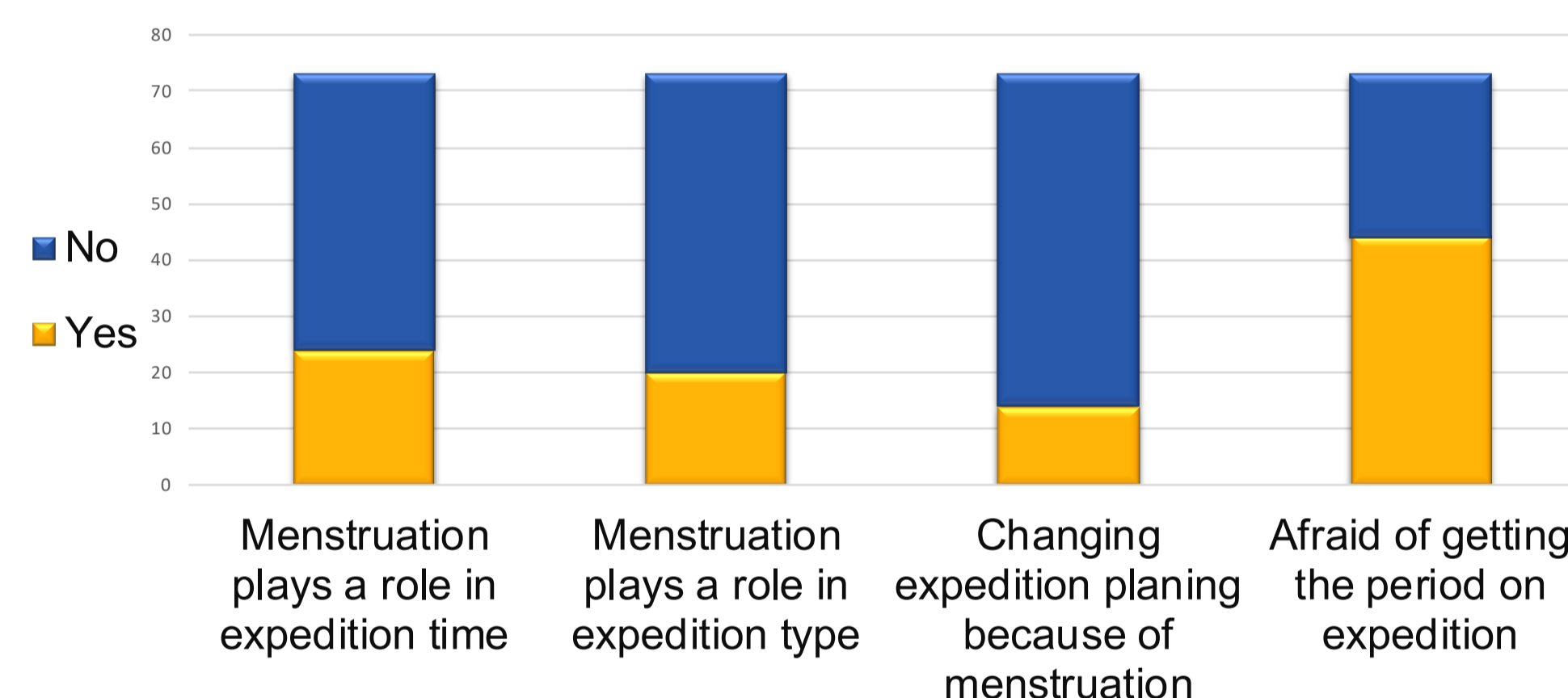
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Results

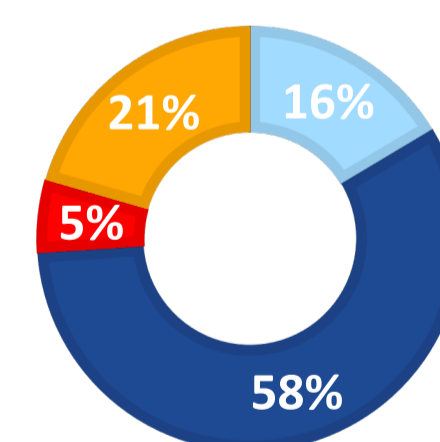
A total of 73 women participated in this study. Of these, 45.2% of the women had periods during the expedition, of which 30.1% were expected and 15.1% were unexpected. Overall, 78.8% of the women with periods reported that they felt subjectively unable to maintain a good level of hygiene during the expedition.

The role of menstruation in expedition planning and well-being



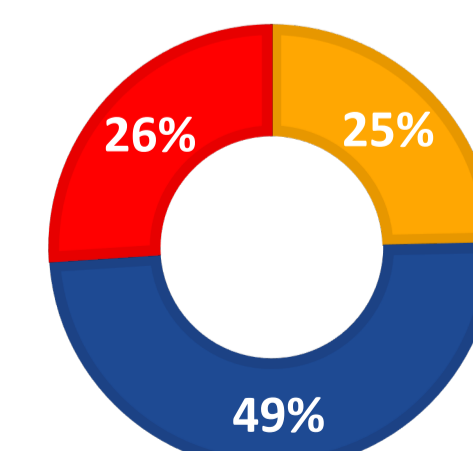
Classification of participants according to expedition type

- Polar expedition
- Mountain expedition
- Desert expedition
- Tropical expedition

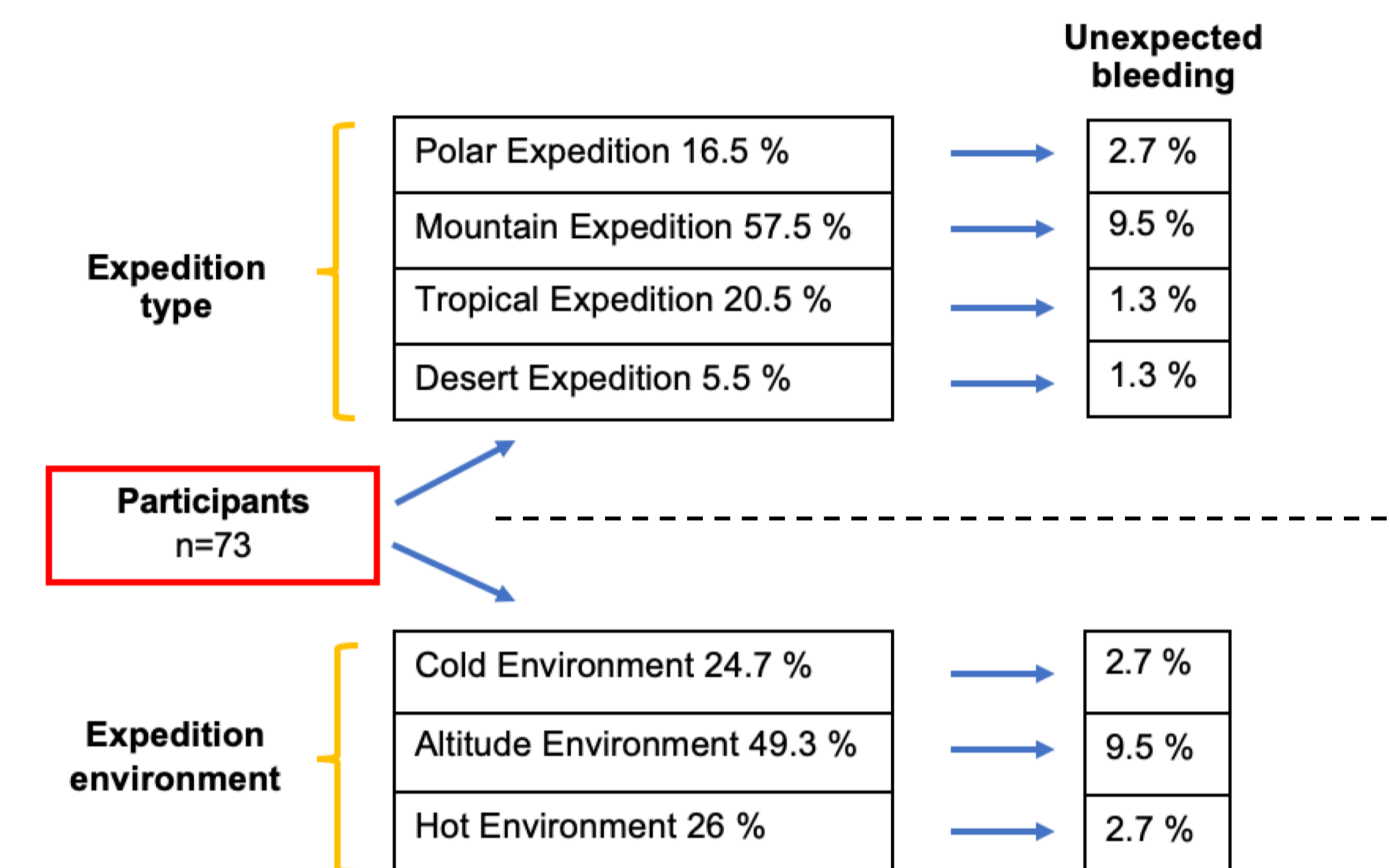


Classification of participants according to expedition environment

- Cold environment
- Altitude environment
- Hot environment



Classification of participants according unexpected bleeding



In addition, the fitter the participants were, the less their period affected them negatively during the expedition.

Conclusion

Menstruation still plays a crucial role for many women today when planning their expedition. Hygiene, lack of clean water, inability to wash hands, limited privacy when going to the toilet and safety are important issues for women and can discourage them from participating in expeditions. In addition, women's basic fitness plays an important role in their well-being on the expedition when they have their period.

Recommendations

- Clear briefing before departure about the given hygiene options during the expedition
- Pre-expedition training programme to physically prepare for the expedition
- Further follow-up studies to detect cycle irregularities due to the expeditions and the environment