

Disclosure of Epilepsy to Potential Employers as a Function of Job Safety and Gender



Randy Lim, Dustin Greelis, & Jeffrey Goodman Ph.D. • University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire



How much do you really know about your new employee?

Hypothesis 1

People with epilepsy will be less likely to divulge their condition to potential future employers if the job they want could be unsafe.

Hypothesis 2

Women with epilepsy will be less likely to disclose their condition than men when applying to a potentially dangerous job.

Research Background

What is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is characterized as a disorder involving abnormal electrical discharges, called seizures, in the brain. It is one of the most frequently diagnosed, chronic neurological disorders in the United States (Mount, Johnstone, White, & Sherman, 2005).

It is not just a medical disorder, it also carries a social stigma. Those with epilepsy are usually careful about who they inform and generally strive to conceal their condition (Troster, 1998). How they decide to share or conceal their disorder often depends on the circumstances in which they potentially could disclose.

Why would someone conceal his/her condition?

People with epilepsy tend to conceal their disorder especially when negative social consequences are anticipated (Troster, 1998). One negative consequence of disclosure is trouble with employment. It can up be to twice as difficult for people with epilepsy to find employment, often because of stereotypes and misunderstandings about the disorder (Jacoby, Gorry, & Baker, 2005). Disclosure of one's condition could potentially lead to the inability for that person to get the job he/she desires.

One reason why disclosure can lead to a person not getting employment is because many employers think it is more likely that a person with epilepsy will have a work-related accident. In fact, over one-third of employers considered people with epilepsy not fit for the positions available (Jacoby et al, 2005).

Since employers are less likely to hire people with epilepsy because of potential risks, we are interested in whether a person is more or less likely to disclose his/her condition of epilepsy to an employer depending on the possibility of harm within the occupation that candidate desires.

Does gender play a part?

Research suggests that females are three times more likely to be employed than males (Bishop, 2004), and because people with epilepsy have difficulty finding jobs (Chaplin, 2005), we believe women with epilepsy will be less likely to disclose their condition than men when applying to a job.

Methods & Discussion

Scenarios



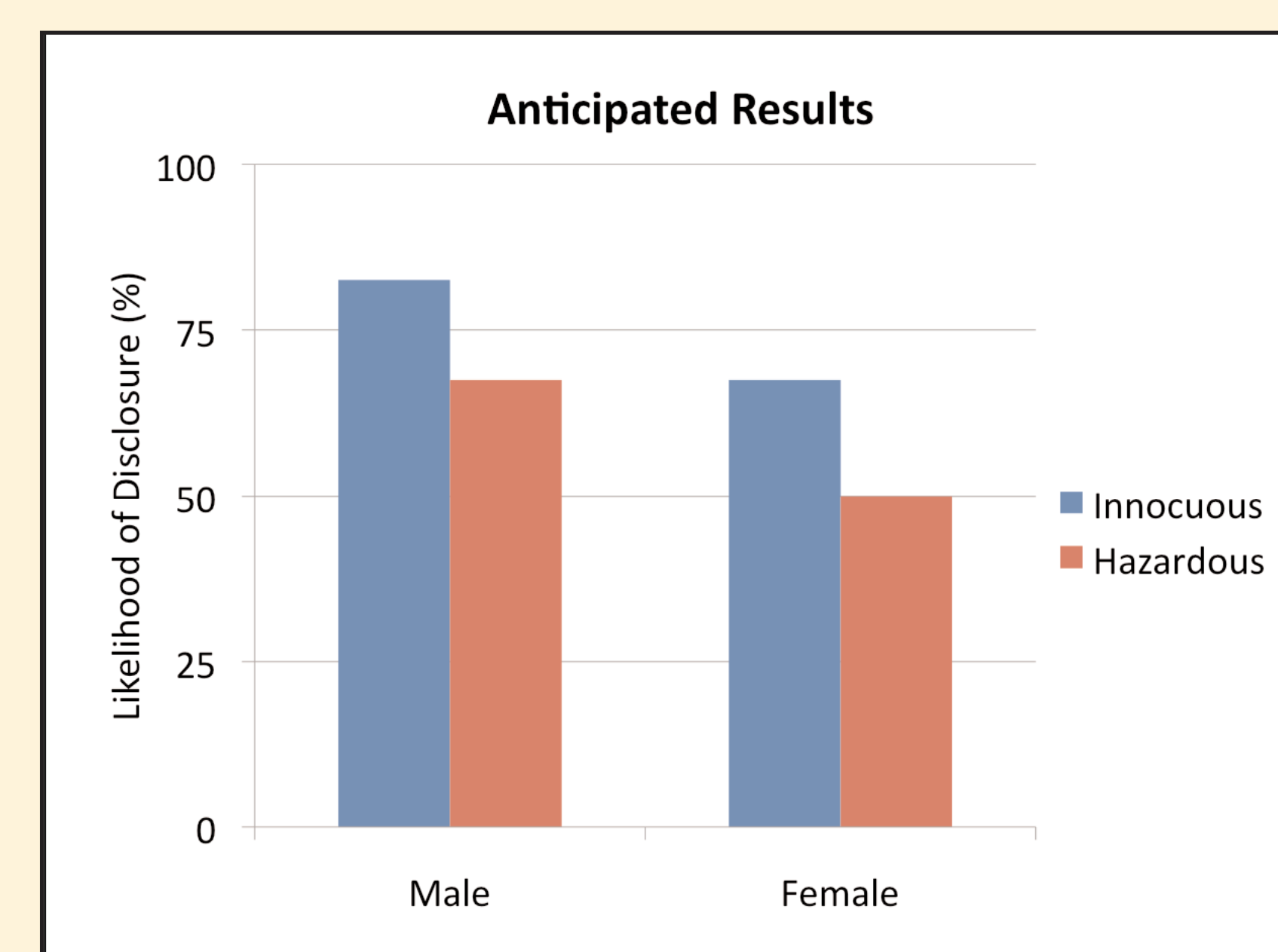
Hazardous

Perform tasks involving physical labor at building, highway, and heavy construction projects, tunnel and shaft excavations, and demolition sites. May operate hand and power tools of all types: air hammers, earth tampers, cement mixers, small mechanical hoists, surveying and measuring equipment, and a variety of other equipment and instruments. May clean and prepare sites, dig trenches, set braces to support the sides of excavations, erect scaffolding, clean up rubble and debris, and remove asbestos, lead, and other hazardous waste materials.

Innocuous

Planning work and supervising staff are key functions of this job. To do these effectively, the supervisor must know the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the staff, as well as the results required and time allotted to each job.

Supervisors must make allowances for unexpected staff absences and other disruptions by adjusting assignments or performing the work themselves if the situation requires it. After allocating work assignments and issuing deadlines, office and administrative support supervisors and managers oversee the work to ensure that it is proceeding on schedule and meeting established quality standards.



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