

## **Audio Description for Individuals with Visual Disability: Enabling Participation in Cultural Events**

Naomi Weiss Ferziger<sup>1</sup>, Asnat Bar-Haim Erez<sup>1</sup>, Naomi Katz<sup>1</sup>, Yossi Dror Freier<sup>2</sup>, Lirit Gruver<sup>2</sup>, Nofar Goren<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ono Academic College, Kiryat Ono, Israel*, <sup>2</sup>*Mashav Applied Research, Jerusalem, Israel*, <sup>3</sup>*The Central Library for Blind, Tel-Aviv, Israel*

**Introduction:** Audio Description (AD) is the systematic method of describing images and important visual events to people with low vision. The technique is used to access cultural events such as movies, theater, and professional conferences and is aimed at enhancing the partaker's experience. The Israeli National Insurance Institute developed an inter-professional task force of social workers, psychologists, and occupational therapists to research the efficacy of this service on community integration. Specifically, does AD address the broader needs of accessibility and its ultimate effect on participation?

**Method:** A mixed design method, between-within participants was used. Each participant attended 2 different shows, with and without AD. Questionnaires were developed to assess the quality of the experience and aspects of accessibility. Data was collected from 50 legally blind participants, mean age 53 yrs.

**Results:** Initial analysis showed that 93% were satisfied with the AD and reported that it enabled sensory and cognitive engagement. It also reduced cognitive and emotional stress that often accompanies social activities. Visiting the stage and the show trailer was noted as key elements in the AD protocol. However, over 50% of the participants identified challenges regarding mobility, physical and technical accessibility issues that may hinder future participation in such activities.

**Conclusions:** AD is an important technique that can be used to enhance the participation of people with low vision in cultural events. It is important that the service be provided alongside physical and cognitive accessibility. The inter-professional team facilitates an in depth examination of this new immersing field.