

Sensory deficits in any modality can lead to an increased feeling of isolation and impede development of various psychological processes. At the same time, studies show that sensory compensation (i.e., improved functioning of remaining senses that can compensate for the lack of one sensory modality) can theoretically enable sensory impaired individuals to function normally in social situations. Existing knowledge about social functioning of sensory impaired individuals and the role of sensory compensation is not systematic and only a few studies compared individuals with one, selected sensory dysfunction to a healthy population. The aim of the presented research project is to broaden the existing knowledge on sensory compensation and social functioning by simultaneous comparisons of individuals suffering from visual and auditory impairments. Studies comparing blind and deaf individuals are particularly interesting due to the similarity of neurological processing of visual and auditory input. Both vision and audition are necessary for sensorimotor integration (e.g. objects identification and space processing) that underlies the ability to interact with other people in social space.

Based on the analysis of scarce literature concerning the problem of social relationships in sensory impaired people and sensory compensation, the project was divided into three parts, that allow to capture a broad picture of social functioning of sensory impaired individuals. The aim of the first part is to explore the influence of sensory deprivation on the convictions about social world. In the second part of the project we will examine the influence of sensory impairments on interpersonal relationships. Finally, in the third part we will conduct studies on the influence of sensory impairments on positive orientation. It is hypothesized that *due to the mechanism of sensory compensation people with visual and auditory impairments handle social interactions just as good as their fully functional counterparts and will present similar (1) convictions about social world; (2) interpersonal relationships; (3) positive orientation.*

To date, research on social functioning of people with impaired senses have not provided a clear answer to the question whether sensory deficits and/or sensory compensation affect interpersonal relations and relations with social environment. Little is also known about the influence of sensory compensation on social relationships. Presented research project will enable us to explore these problems in more detail and determine whether sensory deficits might lead to specific problems in certain aspects of social functioning. Sensory limitations that possibly impede gathering the socially-relevant data affect a large proportion of the society (visual impairment – about 5% of population, hearing impairment – about 6%). The presented research project might therefore contribute to better understanding, and perhaps limiting stereotypes about a large group of sensory impaired individuals.