

The aim of the project entitled “Activists, leaders, (self-)advocates. Experiences of Activism in the Autobiographical Narratives of Women with Disabilities in Poland” is to explore activist experiences of women with disabilities, the reasons for their social activism, and reflections on existing barriers to activism among women with disabilities.

The study is a broad and multifaceted analysis of the individual experiences of women with disabilities. Autobiographical narrative interview is the main data collection technique. In these interviews, female interviewees are invited to tell their life stories.

Additionally, the study undertakes an analysis of the broader context in which the activism is carried out, including social, cultural, political and structural factors. This objective is fulfilled through case studies of the activities of selected NGOs whose leaders are women with disabilities.

As suggested by the previous research carried out in Poland, participation and involvement in the NGO sector plays an important role in the empowerment of women with disabilities. It can increase the sense of empowerment and agency, in line with the "Nothing about us without us" principle.

Women with disabilities are still perceived by the public as passive, helpless, dependent on others, devoided of agency and incompetent. In many fields and spheres of social life, such as education, work, family life, sexuality, maternity, civic and political activity, etc., women with disabilities continue to be burdened with many negative stereotypes, marginalised, and consequently discriminated against.

This study is extremely important for at least two reasons. Firstly, from the point of view of shaping positive social attitudes towards women with disabilities and becoming involved in allied activities on their behalf. Secondly, describing and popularising the stories of women activists with disabilities may provide inspiration and a positive stimulus to take action within local communities and, more broadly, to actively shape civil society by women with disabilities.