

Normal life crises and insanity

Mental ill-health contextualized

Background: According to a survey from 2005 the population of Rosengård, a cultural heterogeneous borough of Malmö, Sweden, utilizes half as much psychiatric health services as expected in relation to estimated needs.

Aim: To examine perceptions of mental ill-health trying to find possible reasons behind the low utilization.

Method: Unstructured interviews were conducted with 30 people living and/or working in the area.

Result: Mental ill-health was associated with insanity and shame. Numerous conditions were considered as “normal life crises” rather than medical states and are consequently taken care of in other ways than seeking mental health care.

Conclusion: Several reasons behind low utilization of psychiatric health services among inhabitants in Rosengård were detected. Explanations are to be found both in different perceptions of mental ill-health, in the social situation in the area but also in the assumptions made in the survey this study was based upon. Despite that Sweden, with its developed welfare system, frequently is described as the country that has coped best with the growing number of immigrants and their various needs, it seems as if the needs are still unexplored, and there is no service for “normal life crises”.