

## **ABSTRACT**

The current study aimed to explore the public awareness of dementia and its risk factors. A qualitative research design was employed, and focus groups were conducted to assess public awareness of dementia and other age related physical and mental health problems. A pilot study was conducted to acquire general information about consultation of people for dementia. As the pilot study indicated very low understanding of dementia among public. The study was conducted in two phases. In both phases, purposive convenience samples were taken. In phase 1, focus groups were conducted to discover more about the way in which ageing and associated difficulties are perceived by people of different age groups. In phase 1, age and education were the inclusion criterion. Age range was 20-80 years and all the participants were graduates, at least. An open-ended questionnaire was used. This phase was conducted to develop culturally relevant vignettes of normal aging and those with memory problems. The grounded theory method was employed to analyze the data obtained from transcribed focus group discussion. As a result three vignettes were developed by using principle categories emerging from this data and were combined with DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The aim of phase 2 was to gain an in-depth picture of public understanding of dementia, and review the appropriate support and services available as perceived by the people. A total of four focus group with different age ranges were conducted in this phase and all three vignettes were employed in each focus group. The data was subjected to grounded theory, content analysis and ethnographic analysis. The results revealed that there was very little or no awareness about dementia even in highly educated people. Highly endorsed models for help was socio-familial help. Negative attitude of elderly was frequently complained. The findings of the study suggest a need for wide spread campaign about the awareness of dementia which requires the joining hands of government, NGOs, and media. This would be further helpful in development and implementation of support program for the dementic patients and their carers