

## REVIEW REPORT

**Title:** Exploring the scope and challenges of palliative care among patients and caregivers in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India: A qualitative inquiry

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**Reviewer F:** Fariha Haseen, ORCID: 0009-0004-9040-1664, COI: None, AI disclosure: None

1. **Comment** No structured abstract was identified in the manuscript.  
**Author response:** A structured abstract has been added with Background and objective, Methods, Results, and Conclusion headings. (Revised manuscript, p. 1, immediately after the keywords.)
2. **Comment** Likert-scale ratings are presented descriptively without explanation regarding their integration into the qualitative framework.  
**Author response:** We have clarified that the Likert-type ratings were not subjected to inferential statistical analysis but were interpreted descriptively to triangulate and contextualise the qualitative themes within the IPA framework.
3. **Comment** Tables are clear and relevant; minor formatting refinement may improve readability.  
**Author response:** We have added interpretation regarding clinical relevance as well as the public health importance.
4. **Comment** No figures were included  
**Author response:** We have revised the title as advised.
5. **Comment** Minimal redundancy; some text overlaps with Table 1 and appendix tables.  
**Author response:** To reduce the noted redundancy, a descriptive clause in the Discussion (spiritual-care detail already presented in the Results and Appendix Table A3) has been removed.
6. **Comment** Well structured and contextualised; the overall recommendation suggested slight condensation for brevity.  
**Author response:** The Discussion has been slightly condensed for brevity consistent with the research-letter format; a redundant clause was removed with no loss of substantive content.
7. **Comment** Limitations are adequately described; strengths could be stated more explicitly.  
**Author response:** An explicit statement of study strengths has been added: the first qualitative inquiry into specialist palliative care experiences in Odisha, a rigorous IPA design, dual independent coding, member-checking, back-translation, and COREQ-compliant reporting.
8. **Comment** Minor editorial polishing may improve conciseness in certain sections.  
**Author response:** Minor editorial polishing for conciseness has been applied, including condensation of the Discussion, and the manuscript has been re-read in full for clarity.

**Responsible editor:** Tahniyah Haq, ORCID: 0000-0002-0863-0619, COI: None, AI disclosure: None

9. **Comment** Was a saturation point reached during data collection?  
**Author response:** Yes. Although interpretative phenomenological analysis prioritises the depth of individual lived experience over data saturation in the conventional grounded-theory sense, recruitment and interviewing continued until no new themes or sub-themes emerged from successive interviews. Saturation was judged to have been reached by the final interviews, which produced no new codes and served only to confirm the existing thematic structure.