Dear Editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript based on the reviewers’ comments. We have carefully considered the suggestions from the reviewers and have consequently revised the manuscript accordingly. Please see below the point-by-point responses to the suggestions. In addition, we have checked the entire manuscript for grammatical and typographical errors. The revisions are tracked in the manuscript.
In addition to the edits by the authors, an English language expert also edited the manuscript. We believe the manuscript has improved vastly and look forward to your kind acceptance for publication.

With kind regards,
Charity Binka, PhD
Corresponding author.

Author's response to reviewers’ comments and suggestions

Reviewer #1: Elizabeth Namukwaya

Thank you for responding to the comments. Most of the comments were addressed. However a few comments from the 2nd reviewer were partly addressed.

In the discussion, the reviewer recommended that the coping strategy of personal hygiene be related to self-image issues, I think this will make your discussion richer.

- Personal hygiene has been related to self-image (Line 370; 386-390).
- Also abstinence as a coping mechanism was not discussed in context of previous literature.

- Even though specific literature on this is scarce, a general literature that encapsulates this has been cited and discussed (Line 374).
- Also, the reviewer asked if knowledge of stage of cancer could have influenced coping, but this was not mentioned in the manuscript. It may be useful to include it in the discussion.

- This has been included in the discussion as recommended (Lines 402-404).

A few minor corrections below for your attention.

Removal of the cervix is not the same as total hysterectomy, I recommend that you leave out the phrase 'removal of cervix' and just maintain total hysterectomy.
This has been done as recommended (Line 97).

line111 should be agreed not have agreed

This has been corrected as recommended (Line 108).

Line 113 May read better if written as thematic saturation achieved after interviewing the 15 respondents

This has been done as recommended (Line 109).

The first sentence of the conclusion should be revised because it is confusing. One may interpret that participants adopted personal support services or psychological support services. Also instead of saying non-material why not mention faith etc.

This has been revised as recommended (Line 437).

Some language corrections are needed.

The manuscript has been proofread.

Eve Namisango (Reviewer 3):

Background:

Line 55 -56: However, in most patients, there may be no symptoms at all whatsoever until the disease is at the advanced stage- this sentence should be referenced.

This has been done (Line 57).

The background should include some statistics about the magnitude of the problem (cervical cancer) and the associated burden.

This has been provided (Lines 49-51).
Methods

There some results in the methods section, which should be moved to the right section [lines 90-100].

These are not results. They are description of study population and inclusion criteria (Lines 90-100).

The main concern with this paper is the sample size, even if saturation were considered [which is lacking in the methods section], one needs a reasonable sample for this type of research question to demonstrate saturation. With 15 patients, how sure would one be that all important concepts are captured for the population of interest; there is reason to be concerned that the population interviewed may not contain a representative sample a limitation which should be acknowledged as we cannot be sure of what would have been observed if more individuals were included.

Saturation has been considered in the methods section and this has been revised under reviewer #1 above. The concepts identified were deemed sufficient enough to achieve the purpose of the study.

Sampling: Was any purposive criteria considered to ensure some degree of sampling variability?

I would advise the authors to consider a theoretical saturation appraisal, if the concepts identified are sufficient then this should be stated, else one would be impelled to recruit more people to do justice to the research question.

Yes, this has been stated in the first line of the sampling procedure. Also, the concepts identified were sufficient and this was stated in Line 111.

Data analysis: This section is way too brief and lacks important details. For example, was the data solely coded by one person? If yes, this should be revisited, there should be some checks - having a second person review codes etc. It is also not clear how the coding frame used in the analysis was generated.
The data were not solely coded by one person. We stated in lines 128-130 that the transcripts were given to language experts to review and revise the content. We explained that the codes were generated based on the emerging themes in the interviews.

Results: The study response rate should be stated.

We reported in the methods section that 15 participants were recruited and they were all interviewed so we deemed it not appropriated to state response rate.

The authors should consider including a limitations section and acknowledge any potential biases and methodological limitations and the extent to which they can affect the interpretation of the results.

These were already stated in the last paragraph of the discussion section in lines 429-437.