Reviewer’s report

Title: “They’re always there”: Resident Experiences of Living with Rats in a Disadvantaged Urban Neighbourhood

Version: 1 Date: 12 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Louise Lawson

Reviewer's report:

Overall much improved and I enjoyed reading your paper. I think the findings could be clearer and better structured around three main themes (rather than five). I know you have taken out some quotes but I still there are too many (sorry) and it is repetitive in places. Linked to this, the methodology still reads textbook so I think this could be better linked to the findings/analysis.

Background is much improved. Background to the methodology and rationale for VANDU clearer.

Still some gaps in the methodology. I would take out the comment on saturation as you admit yourself that you have not reached saturation and the sample is relatively small. It would be described as a ‘convenience sample’?

The approach to analysis is textbook and abstract - I would either shorten this or make more relevant to the study i.e. explain how the themes emerged from the process by using an actual example.

I do not think the five themes work well. Still too many quotes; even though they are lively they need more analysis. It is useful to read each paragraph without quotes as it should be clear and analytical without the quotes (they are for illustrative purposes). Currently some disconnect between the findings and discussion.

I suggest developing your five themes into three. Current themes:

1) Rat encounters - this is actually very short relative to other themes, and contextual, if you take out the quotes.

2) Perceptions of rats - disease, risk of disease and contamination, and symbolism linked to being judged, bad neighbourhood.

3) Mental health impacts and consequences - this is really about emotional (and physical) response (e.g. anger, exhaustion, fear); behavioural response and strategies; sleep impact. Consequences [links to lack of control, poverty and lack of housing] . Quite repetitive. Too many quotes.
4) Perspectives on rat control efforts - this is an issue about power and control, responsibility; issues of neglect due to poverty, homelessness and marginalisation.

5) Relative importance of rats - first paragraph seems a bit obvious. I don't think this section works that well and downplays the argument (although it is still important). I think this issue is part of the bigger picture around social injustice, lack of control, neglectful behaviour by authorities for people who are marginalised and living in poverty.

Suggested three themes (incorporating the original five):

1) [1 and 5] Context and symbolism - what the neighbourhoods issues are and how rats are perceived and symbolised within this context.

2) [2 and 3] Emotional and physical responses, strategies and consequences.

3) [4 but also aspects of 2, 3 and 5] Power, control and responsibility.
   P15 - interesting comment about feeling judged.
   End of p24 'this connection between the availability....' this is powerful and says a lot.
   P28 - last paragraph strong.

Big issues emerging are environmental injustice, social injustice and poverty and control, linked to the presence of rats in the neighbourhood. This is covered well in the discussion.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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