Reviewer's report

Title: Human rights' interdependence and indivisibility: A glance over the human rights to water and sanitation

Version: 0 Date: 22 Jun 2018

Reviewer: Ilana Seff

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to review this article. This is a unique and interesting qualitative study that provides important insight into the interdependence and indivisibility of the right to water and sanitation with other human rights. The authors have elicited rich and insightful responses from the study participants that could usefully be shared with public health researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. I very much enjoyed learning more about a topic that is admittedly outside of my area of expertise, content-wise. However, in the current version of the article, the actual research activities and subsequent findings seem disjointed from the introduction. I feel that substantial revisions to the introduction are needed in order to better situate and motivate this study. Additionally, I have a few larger concerns about how the results are presented and interpreted. I have outlined all concerns below.

Introduction

1. I am concerned that the introduction section of this article does not provide the appropriate background and motivation for the corresponding research implemented by the authors. As the introduction stands, the reader is led to believe the article will be a commentary or theoretical summary of the evolution of, and current discourse around, HRWS. The last sentence of the introduction, 'For this, were interviewed homeless living in the municipality of Belo Horizonte, Brazil', comes as somewhat of a surprise to the reader and feels out of place given the preceding introduction. I suggest that the authors condense the existing text around the history of human rights conferences, documents, etc., and include additional review of (1) current access to water and sanitation at the global level, as well as a summary of regional variation and disparities based on other characteristics that might suggest marginalization of some groups when it comes to access to this human right, (2) countries' willingness to provide water and sanitation to their populations, (3) the extent to which access to water and sanitation seem to be linked to other human rights (health, etc.)/ results from any other studies that have conducted research similar to the one presented here.

2. The authors note that the aim of this article is to "discuss the extent to which…". I would suggest changing this to 'explore' or something similar, as this article presents findings from a research paper. Again, similar to my comment above, the introduction section
leads the reader to believe he or she will be reading a commentary or summary piece, rather than the findings from a research study.

Methods

3. A paragraph is needed providing context around the study setting. What is Belo Horizonte like? What is known about the living conditions there already? How was this setting selected? Providing background information on this site and motivation for why this setting was chosen would improve the article.

4. Line 148, you note that you interviewed "men and women living in the streets age <18 years old". Should this be ">18 years"? Is there a reason you only interviewed minors? Please add this to the text and discuss issues around consent and ethics for interviewing minors.

5. How were privacy and confidentiality ensured for the 12 interviews that were carried out on the streets? Can the authors add a sentence answering this?

6. I would suggest moving the text on development and piloting of the semi-structured interview to before the paragraph beginning on line 161.

7. Please elaborate somewhat on the analysis phase. Was a codebook developed? Were the transcripts analyzed by each researcher separately and then compared, or did the two researchers analyze the transcripts together? Was a program used to aid in the analysis? Were any inter-rater reliability tests conducted?

8. The article would be strengthened by adding a brief discussion of any subjectivity reflections conducted by the researchers/authors. How might the researchers’ own backgrounds and conceptions and perceptions of this topic have influenced development of the interview questions, researchers' demeanors during interviews, and the analytical process, and what steps were taken to minimize the effects of these elements on biasing the study's conclusion.
Results/discussion

9. I would begin the results/discussion section with a brief overview of the types of themes that emerged in the interviews.

10. Unless it is in the style of the journal to combine the results and discussion sections, I would suggest first presenting the results and then discussion. The current approach makes it difficult to distinguish which points can be directly shown from the interviews and which are the authors' own interpretation and speculation.

11. If this section is left as is, a summary of the findings in each sub-section is needed before moving into the discussion. The conclusions discussed in the discussion -- for example, "These reports are aligned to what many authors point out: the full rights' accomplishment must be approached from the indivisibility and interdependence point of view," -- are not to be directly inferred from the quotes presented. The authors need to provide a stronger link for the reader between the responses from study participants and the authors' interpretation. Additional text should be added after each block of quotes that summarizes the themes the authors are trying to highlight. This will help the reader understand the subsequent conclusions the authors draw.

12. Some of the articles cited in the discussion section would be great additions to the introduction as noted in my first comment.

13. Yes! The introduction and summary of the quotes from lines 244-270 is wonderful. The paragraph preceding the quotes provides context for the reader and provides a direct summary of what can be truly shown from the quotes. I suggest following a similar protocol for the first set of quotes.

14. Please include a paragraph or section on study limitations.

Abstract

15. Please include method of analysis in the abstract.
Minor comments:

1. Typo on line 47: Covenants, not covenant

2. I believe the word 'survey' in the abstract should be 'study'

3. Word 'discuss' in the abstract should be 'explore'

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

No

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

Yes

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published
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