

## **Review comment -2**

The manuscript explores an important and timely issue: how future professionals conceptualize social justice. However, the contribution would be strengthened with clearer methodological rigor.

Although it may be clearer to specify graduate student perspectives on social justice or reference the autoethnographic nature.

Partially. It outlines the purpose and themes but does not clearly explain the methods or findings structure. Suggest adding methodological clarification.

Mostly. Some phrasing can be tightened for clarity, but the tone is engaging and professional.

The literature review is thorough, but the methods and results sections need better organization and explanation. The method section is a major weakness. The qualitative methodology is underdeveloped and lacks sufficient detail about data collection, coding, and trustworthiness. See Specific Comments.

Possibly. The use of student reflections may require further ethical clarification, especially regarding consent and IRB.

1. Add a clear description of qualitative methodology, including coding steps and role of researchers.
2. Clarify the autoethnographic approach and positionality of the authors.
3. Provide a demographics table for participants.
4. Consider adding another table summarizing themes with representative quotes.
5. Reduce long quotes and expand on analysis of patterns.
6. Address ethical considerations—was consent obtained from students? Was IRB review completed or deemed unnecessary?
7. **Specific Comments:**
8. With the goal of the paper being to address the research questions- **What are postsecondary students' perspectives of social justice?**- I will provide feedback that I hope will help the authors strengthen their paper.
9. Lit Review:
10. While the manuscript presents a well-researched and passionate literature review, it would benefit from greater focus, clearer thematic organization, stronger theoretical grounding, and deeper integration of empirical research. Strengthening these areas would enhance the coherence of the literature review and better support the study's research questions.

11. Based on RQ1- There needs to be a bridge between the concepts and how students themselves might interpret them. There is no real synthesis that says here's how scholars define it, versus here's what we don't know about how students (especially graduate students in social work or higher education) define it.

Based on RQ2-What is missing:

- Research on student identity development and how it affects views on equity and justice.
- Literature on experiential learning, critical pedagogy, or transformative learning (e.g., Freire, Mezirow).
- Prior qualitative or narrative studies where students described their evolving views of social justice. Currency is important here as well.
- Autoethnographic or reflective writing research as a methodological model.
- Include empirical studies where students reflect on or define social justice from personal experience.
- Incorporate literature on student development theory, critical consciousness, or transformative learning.
- Discuss the value of journaling or reflective writing as a method for exploring subjective perspectives.

Methods:

This is the section of the paper that needs the most attention.

1. Ethical Considerations

While institutional policies declare certain pedagogical activities exempt from IRB review, the authors acknowledge that the current manuscript involves the retrospective analysis of student-generated data with the intent to publish. This is a major area of concern that is grey and needs to be clarified and aligned. The first sentence in the Methods sections states that this is a study; that warrants IRB oversight. Was consent obtained from the participants, or was it deemed unnecessary by the IRB? Personal reflections don't require IRB approval in instances of reflections/opinions, yet this needs to be clarified and explicit. Yet because this information is presented as data to be published, I am inclined to believe that IRB approval may be required. I recommend the authors consult with their IRB/ethics review board for guidance.

2. Methodological Concerns

- The methods section is underdeveloped for a qualitative study, particularly one using autoethnography and inductive coding.
- There is no explanation of autoethnographic positioning. The authors do not clarify their roles in relation to the participants—whether they are instructors, facilitators, co-researchers, or insiders.
- The data source is vaguely described. It is unclear whether the student journal reflections are treated as research data and how these were collected, anonymized, and stored.
- The section lacks indicators of qualitative rigor:
  - No discussion of researcher reflexivity or potential bias; no audit trail or explanation of how data coding decisions were made; no description of whether qualitative software or manual coding was used; no discussion of how inter-rater reliability or trustworthiness was ensured.
- Only one table is mentioned, with limited detail. There is no visual coding framework or thematic summary chart to illustrate how findings were derived.

### 3. Presentation of Results

- While the selected quotations are vivid and illustrative, there is limited analytical depth in explaining how these quotations were grouped into the five emergent themes.
- The current sample description provides detailed demographic information, but it is presented in a dense paragraph format that can be difficult to interpret. To improve clarity and readability, consider presenting this information in one or more summary tables or visualizations.
  - A participant demographics table would allow readers to quickly understand the composition of the sample across key variables. This is especially important given the study's emphasis on identity, disciplinary background, and regional context.

### 4. Over-Reliance on Quotations

- The findings section relies heavily on extended participant quotes, often without sufficient synthesis or analytical commentary.

- The authors would strengthen the findings by condensing the quotes and placing greater emphasis on cross-participant analysis, patterns, and interpretation.