

## **Review comment -4**

The study addresses a highly **relevant and timely topic** by exploring how future professionals in fields dedicated to social change (Social Work and Higher Education) conceptualize "social justice." Understanding these conceptualizations is crucial because an individual's definition of a construct directly informs their professional practice and advocacy efforts. The findings contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation regarding social justice education and its practical application, providing a qualitative foundation for future curriculum development and professional training in these disciplines.

The current title, "More than Words? Delving into the Substantive Meaning(s) of 'Social Justice' In a Socially Unjust World," is evocative and sets a rhetorical tone, but it is not entirely suitable for a scholarly article. The title sets a tone that the Unjust is cutting across many societies.

The Literature is disproportionately long and reads more like a comprehensive review of the entire field of social justice than a focused review supporting the current study. The detailed historical accounts and extensive definitions of various dimensions of social justice (environmental, restorative, moral integrity) are not directly relevant to the qualitative conceptualizations of the participants. Suggestion: Focus the review narrowly on existing studies of social justice conceptualizations, definitions in Social Work/Higher Education curricula, and the theoretical frameworks underpinning the five themes found.

Methodology: Data Collection: How were the definitions elicited? Was it a survey question, an interview prompt, or a focus group discussion? Data Analysis: The description of the thematic analysis is superficial. It mentions "words and phrases were the units of analysis" and "inter-rater agreement," but does not detail the specific steps of the phenomenological analysis (e.g., bracketing, coding process, consensus method). Suggestion: The authors must elaborate on the specific data collection instrument and provide a detailed, step-by-step account of the qualitative data analysis process to establish rigor and trustworthiness.

This manuscript presents a **timely and valuable qualitative study** on how graduate students conceptualize social justice, a topic of critical importance to the fields of Social Work and Higher Education. The identification of five distinct themes is a **strong and publishable finding**. The authors should **revise the manuscript by cutting the Literature Review by at least 50%, significantly expanding the Methodology section, and** the research question and findings are strong enough to warrant this effort.