

Social Justice, Human Rights, Deliberate Action: An Analytical Review of the Literature in Seven Social Justice Thematic Areas

Justicia Social, Derechos Humanos, Acción Deliberada: Una revisión analítica de la literatura en siete áreas temáticas de Justicia Social

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Abstract

This article presents an analytical review of contemporary social justice themes, drawing on an extensive literature survey. The review demonstrates that social justice is a central theme in many contemporary social struggles and demands for rights and justice. It further identifies key thematic issues, their normative foundations, and the principles of social justice, exploring how these are elaborated across different issue areas where social justice is a core concern. In several cases, social justice is also presented as a cross-cutting concern and conceptual approach. An overall literature survey identified 40 topical-thematic issue areas in which social justice is evoked and often thoroughly discussed. This article provides an overview of how social justice is addressed in seven of those 40 thematic topics. It presents summary analytical reviews of the literature on social justice considerations and dimensions in various arenas, including Human Rights, Decent Work, Health, Housing, the Digital Divide, Peacemaking/Small Arms Limitations, and Sustainable Development. These summaries review the connection between each topic and social justice and conclude with recommendations for how the social justice dimensions of each topic could be integrated into

Summary: Introduction, Methodology, Results: Analytical Review, Overall Conclusions.

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ongoing international policy processes, including the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the Second World Summit for Social Development, to be held in November 2025, and the implementation of their outcomes.

Keywords: Decent Work, Social Justice, Digital Divide, Disparities in Access to Technology, Peacebuilding, Sustainable Development.

Resumen

Este artículo ofrece una revisión analítica de temas contemporáneos de justicia social, basada en un amplio estudio de la literatura. La revisión demuestra que la justicia social es un tema central en contenciones sociales y demandas de derechos y justicia contemporáneas. Esta revisión identificó, además, algunos de los temas clave y sus fundamentos normativos y principios de justicia social, y cómo estos se desarrollan en diferentes áreas temáticas que hacen referencia a la justicia social como un tema central. Algunos también muestran que es una preocupación común y un enfoque conceptual transversal. Un estudio general de la literatura identificó 40 áreas temáticas en cada una de las cuales se evoca la justicia social, a menudo ampliamente discutida. Esta revisión proporciona una visión general de cómo se identifica la justicia social en siete de los 40 temas cubiertos en el estudio amplio de la literatura. Aquí se presentan revisiones analíticas resumidas de la literatura sobre consideraciones de la justicia social en las áreas de Derechos Humanos, Trabajo Decente, Salud, Vivienda, Brecha Digital, Construcción de la Paz/limitación de armas pequeñas y Desarrollo Sostenible. En estos, se examinan las conexiones en el ámbito temático con la justicia social y se ofrecen como conclusiones de las respectivas revisiones algunas recomendaciones sobre cómo el tema en sus dimensiones de justicia social debería ser abordado por los procesos internacionales en curso, incluida la Coalición Mundial para la Justicia Social y la Segunda Cumbre Mundial sobre Desarrollo Social en 2025, y la posterior implementación de sus resultados.

Palabras clave: Trabajo decente, Justicia social, brecha digital, disparidades en el acceso a la tecnología, consolidación de la paz, desarrollo sostenible.

Introduction

Our review of a vast body of literature indicates that social justice serves as an overarching conceptual and political framework for contemporary social struggles and demands for rights and justice. The literature identifies key thematic issues linked to social justice and highlights their foundations. Many works present social justice as a commonly associated—and even umbrella—concept and theme.

However, the literature also reveals that social justice is defined in various ways and used flexibly, if at all. Often it appears to be invoked to characterize and justify as good or beneficial whatever an institution, organization, government, or individual is doing, frequently without a clear and critical assessment of a policy's actual outcomes or whose interests it serves.

Following the invitation to compile, prepare and edit a special edition on social justice for *Revista Tecnológica Espol (RTE)*, the *Global Migration Policy Associates (GMPA)* team recognized the need for a concrete and thorough understanding of what is being addressed and what is meant when actors evoke the term and concept of social justice. This work was also developed in the context of ongoing global efforts led by the *Global Coalition for Social Justice (GCSJ)*, an international initiative that aims to promote coordinated action on social justice through research, policy, and advocacy. The Coalition convened its Second Forum in June 2025 in Geneva, and its recommendations are expected to shape the agenda of the Second

World Summit for Social Development, scheduled for November 2025 in Doha. In this context, the GMPA team conducted a comprehensive literature survey throughout 2024, supported by a team of graduate researchers completing 'research associate' internships at GMPA.

The team identified broad areas of exploration, including theoretical background and definitions. Additionally, 40 topics were identified in which the literature invoked or intersected with social justice. These included: Human Rights; Peacebuilding; Development; a Safe, Healthy and Sustainable Environment; Decent Work; Health and Universal Health Care; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; Affordable Housing; Education and Schooling; Minimum Basic Income; Social Protection; Non-Discrimination and Equality of Treatment; Inclusion and Participation; Access to Technology/Digital Divide; and Human Security; among others.

As a key step in the process of building aggregate knowledge and understanding of social justice, team members undertook the next step: analyzing the literature summarized for each topical area, with each topical review covering 15 to 20 (or more) titles. The methodology for review and analysis is described below.

Given the variation in how the term is used across the literature, this study approaches social justice as a broad and multidimensional umbrella concept. It encompasses a range of interrelated concerns, including equitable access to resources and opportunities, the protection of marginalized communities, fair labor conditions, health equity, and inclusive development. These components may be referred to in the literature as "dimensions," "considerations," or "undergirding principles" of social justice, depending on context and emphasis. Despite this terminological variation, what unites these references is a normative orientation toward addressing systemic bias, discrimination, exclusion, and inequality, and promoting fairness and justice across diverse social contexts. Clarifying this conceptual framing at the outset allows for a more coherent analysis of how the term is evoked and applied across the thematic areas reviewed.

While acknowledging the varied and sometimes ambiguous usage of the term social justice across disciplines, this article argues that a thematic review of the literature can help illuminate shared normative orientations and practical implications. These insights may serve to inform ongoing global policy dialogues, such as those within the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the Second World Summit for Social Development.

What follows are summary analytical reviews of the literature evoking social justice concerns in the thematic areas of Human Rights, Decent Work, Health, Housing, Digital Divide, Peacemaking/Small Arms Limitations, and Sustainable Development.

Methodology

The methodological approach comprised two main steps. The first was compiling an annotated literature review organized by topical-thematic categories related to social justice as evoked in the literature, discourse, and practice. Brief one- to two-paragraph summaries were prepared for each item of literature, noting the main content, ideas, and the mention of or links to social justice. These were compiled into a survey report covering more than 800 articles, book chapters, policy briefs, institutional statements, profiles, and other documents across 40 topical categories, totaling 240 pages at the time of writing.

The literature survey was conducted over the past year with the assistance of a graduate-level research team, which contributed to the production of annotated summaries for the

approximately 800 works selectively identified in the initial round. The team employed a schematic *prisma* approach to select relevant documents and publications, using paired keywords (social justice and the name of each thematic topic) as search terms. An initial overview reading of the identified items allowed for the selection of those that substantively discuss the triad of the thematic topic, social justice, and the inter-relationships between them. This initial round focused on literature in the English language. Reviews of works in French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and other languages remain pending, dependent on resource availability, to gain a fuller global view and assessment.

The second and ongoing stage comprised a structured, significantly more detailed review and analysis of the literature found in each of the seven social justice topical-thematic areas reviewed in this article. This analytical review examined the content of the literature according to the following research and analysis questions:

- I. What are they talking about?
 - General characteristics of the topical content as noted in the articles: academic studies, case studies, campaigns, actions, organizational descriptions, etc.
 - Definitions of the topic area, as stated or defined in international instruments and/or by international organizations or academics, including variants that arise in the literature.
- II. How is it linked to, based on, or supportive of social justice (or not)?
 - Usage of the term: elaborated or only mentioned.
 - Explicit linking of the topic/concern/action to social justice and to what extent.
- III. What specific concept and definition of social justice are articulated?
 - Concept/conceptualization of social justice evoked or referred to.
 - Definition of social justice explicitly raised or outlined.
 - Normative bases referred to.
- IV. What explanation is given for the links between the topic and social justice?
 - Explanation of how the entity, agenda, activity, etc., advances social justice.
 - References to other topics, issues, and actions on social justice.
- V. What recommendations are made on *what to do?* (With current global processes as reference points)
 - How a global coalition on social justice should address the issues discussed in the literature.
 - How this social justice topic area should be taken up in the Second World Summit on Social Development process.

The structured literature analysis focused on seven thematic areas selected based on the depth and relevance of their connection to social justice, as previously outlined.

Results: Analytical Review

Social Justice and Human Rights

General Characteristics of Topical Content

This topical review found a considerable number of articles, academic studies, policy reports, and advocacy statements that explicitly elaborate on the intersection between human rights and social justice, both in titles and content. These works generally refer to the normative frameworks of human rights in relation to social justice, highlighting how these frameworks promote equality and inclusion while also addressing systemic injustice. Several sources referred to definitions of human rights in international standards, most notably the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as well as their relationship to social justice. The literature also addressed how different arenas, such as labor rights and public health, incorporate human rights to promote social justice.

Across the reviewed texts, social justice is commonly framed as the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, with a particular focus on eliminating systemic disadvantages. Many studies identify human rights as a normative framework through which social justice can be understood and implemented.

The Link Between Human Rights and Social Justice

Some of the literature reviewed elaborates on links between human rights and social justice. For example, Cotula (2020) highlights how international human rights law can address challenges brought by economic globalization, advocating for an empowered approach that centers on marginalized groups. Amnesty International (2015) critiques traditional human rights frameworks for failing to fully address systemic inequalities and calls for a more inclusive approach that integrates social justice ideals. Braveman (2010) explores the integration of human rights into policy and its role in addressing systemic inequality. A statement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Bachelet (2019), explicitly discussed social justice.

Ms. Bachelet's 2019 statement, Rashid Bhat and colleagues' empirical analysis of the correlation between human rights and social justice indicators (Bhat et al., 2022), and Tim De Meyer's (2022) discussion on labor rights demonstrate how the integration of human rights principles and norms across various sectors promotes social justice.

In Braveman's (2010) work, social justice is linked to addressing the social determinants of health—factors such as income, education, and housing—and argues for integrating human rights with public health policies to reduce inequities. The Amnesty International report (2015) defines social justice as the equitable treatment and protection of marginalized communities within human rights frameworks.

Tim De Meyer's (2022) work on labor rights emphasizes how fair wages, maternity protection, and safe working conditions contribute to social justice by promoting decent work for all. Similarly, Kenyon et al. (2018) emphasize how addressing social determinants of health through a rights-based approach can promote both human rights and social justice, particularly within marginalized communities.

Several works referenced global efforts to integrate human rights protections with broader social justice agendas. For example, Cotula (2020) discusses the need to address economic globalization within the human rights framework to empower marginalized communities and create a fairer international system.

Recommendations

This literature generally emphasizes the need for a multidimensional approach to addressing the intersection of human rights and social justice. Cotula (2020) recommends rethinking international human rights law to better address the challenges posed by economic globalization. Rashid Bhat et al. (2022) stress the importance of policymakers prioritizing the reduction of economic inequality through enhanced human rights protections, particularly in the labor and public health sectors.

Based on these findings, the authors of this review recommend that both the Global Coalition for Social Justice (CSJ) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) emphasize the integration of human rights frameworks with social justice agendas. Key areas of focus should include labor rights, universal health coverage equity, and addressing systemic discrimination, exclusion, and inequalities exacerbated by globalization.

To enhance relevance to these platforms, it is further recommended that the GCSJ prioritize aligning human rights-based protections—such as employment and health—with broader justice-driven development strategies. Similarly, the WSSD could focus on applying the insights from the literature to promote policy measures that safeguard rights and reduce discrimination, exclusion, and inequity. Strengthening the connection between human rights and social justice in these global efforts may help ensure inclusive legal frameworks and multilateral cooperation that actively protect marginalized communities – indeed, all communities – and ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Health and Social Justice

General Characteristics of Topical Content

The reviewed literature presents a comprehensive exploration of how health disparities intersect with broader social justice concerns. Core themes include public health strategies, social determinants, healthcare equity, ethical principles, intersectionality, and structural factors such as climate change and migration.

Corey H. Basch (2014) advocates for population-level public health interventions that address the root causes of poverty as a means to mitigate health disparities. Braveman and Gottlieb (2014) similarly emphasize tackling the "causes of the causes" of inequities. These authors emphasize the importance of considering social, economic, and environmental contexts—rather than focusing solely on individual behaviors or clinical access—when aiming to improve health outcomes.

Cummiskey (2008) advocates for a social insurance approach to healthcare, arguing that it should be treated as a social good rather than a market commodity. Prah Ruger (2004) and Daniels (2008) echo this normative framing by positioning health as a fundamental aspect of social justice that demands institutional and governmental focus.

The literature also includes global and regional reports. The WHO (2008) emphasizes social determinants of health, while the OHCHR (2016) connects climate change, health, and inequality. Whitehead and Dahlgren (2021) advocate a multisectoral strategy to reduce health inequities in Europe.

Several region- and population-specific studies further contextualize these themes: Garneau and Bélisle (2021) call for equity-based transformation in Canadian health education; Griffiths et al. (2016) and Gooshki et al. (2016) focus on Indigenous and migrant health, respectively; and Pande et al. (2017) propose a multidimensional framework for assessing health justice in Egypt.

Intersectionality is introduced by Crenshaw (1989) and developed by Metzl and Hansen (2014), highlighting how overlapping identities shape health outcomes. Rogers and Kelly (2011) employ a feminist intersectional lens to connect research ethics with structural justice, while Dagrón (2019) examines the intersection of legal barriers with health and migration. Environmental dimensions of health justice are emphasized in Rouf and Wainwright's (2020) analysis of climate change.

Normative foundations include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25) and the WHO Constitution, both of which affirm the right to health. Additional global frameworks, such as Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and SDG 3, reinforce the right to equitable, quality healthcare without financial burden.

The Link Between Health and Social Justice

Many of the reviewed studies directly connect health systems to social justice, while others approach the relationship more implicitly. Basch (2014) and Farmer (2004) both argue that addressing structural causes of ill health is essential to achieving social justice. Gostin and Powers (2006) examine this connection in public health policy, while Buettner-Schmidt and Lobo (2012) focus on nursing.

Dilworth-Anderson et al. (2012) and Griffiths et al. (2016) explore disparities affecting minority elders and Indigenous communities, respectively. Maja et al. (2023) provide a comprehensive global overview of health inequality, while Owen (2009) critiques consumer-driven healthcare from a justice perspective.

A significant portion of the literature engages normative political theory. Ruger (2010) proposes a theory of health justice grounded in the capability approach, which integrates both ethical reasoning and procedural fairness. Peter (2001) and Pande et al. (2017) draw on Rawlsian principles, particularly "justice as fairness" (Rawls, 1971), to argue that unequal health outcomes reflect broader societal injustices.

Dukhanin et al. (2018) introduce distributive justice frameworks—such as prioritarianism, egalitarianism, and sufficientarianism—into healthcare economics. Persad (2018) reviews metrics of justice, including welfarism, resourcism, and capabilities, emphasizing their role in evaluating public health interventions.

Powers and Faden's (2006) six-dimensional theory of justice (health, personal security, reasoning, respect, attachment, self-determination) is applied in Gooshki et al. (2016) to analyze migrant health in Iran. Merz et al. (2023) build on Collins' definition of intersectionality as both a research and justice framework, proposing a paradigm shift in public health scholarship.

Ethical critiques are also prominent: Rogers and Kelly (2011) emphasize the importance of redistributive fairness in research design, while Ruger (2010) provides operational frameworks for evaluating health equity and allocating resources efficiently.

Economic evaluation literature (Dukhanin et al., 2018; Drummond et al., 2005) outlines both direct (equity weighting, stratified cost-effectiveness) and indirect (multicriteria decision analysis) strategies for incorporating justice. Merz et al. (2023) stress the importance of epistemological reflexivity in intersectional public health research.

Recommendations

The reviewed literature emphasizes that advancing social justice in health requires both ethical frameworks and concrete institutional reforms. Ruger (2010) proposes a model of shared health governance, which distributes responsibility among governments, institutions, civil society, and individuals. This model is grounded in ethical commitments and aims to achieve equity through the redistribution of resources, public regulation, and the creation of public goods. By including both personal and collective obligations, Ruger's theory links health equity to a broader vision of participatory justice.

Complementing this theoretical foundation, Pande et al. (2017) provide a practical roadmap for improving health systems through 14 targeted, evidence-based reforms. These include national action plans, integrated service delivery, monitoring high-risk groups, provider payment reforms, grievance mechanisms, and citizen participation. Their model emphasizes that achieving social justice in healthcare requires systemic and institutional transformation backed by policy instruments.

Building on these contributions, this review recommends that the Global Coalition for Social Justice (GCSJ) integrate shared health governance principles into its agenda. Given its multi-actor composition, GCSJ is well-positioned to support cross-sector coordination in areas such as equitable healthcare access, financing, and quality assurance. Ruger's emphasis on co-responsibility offers a compelling ethical basis for guiding coalition initiatives.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) should align Sustainable Development Goal 3—"Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages"—with actionable social justice frameworks. Pande et al.'s reform package provides a concrete entry point for operationalizing health equity in summit-level commitments.

Both platforms should prioritize Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as a global justice imperative. Framing UHC not only as a health goal but as a human right can help shift the focus from access alone to structural transformation. Drawing on justice frameworks from Ruger, Powers and Faden, and Pande et al., these efforts can embed fairness, accountability, and participation at the core of global health governance.

Decent Work and Social Justice

General Characteristics of Topical Content

The concept of decent work has long been recognized as a cornerstone of social justice. As work constitutes an integral part of human life, ensuring decent work is fundamental to improving the quality of life and promoting equity. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has played a pivotal role in defining and advancing the decent work agenda, which centers on fair income, job security, social protection, and the safeguarding of workers' rights. This definition underpins both international labor standards and Sustainable Development Goal 8, which promotes inclusive economic growth and decent work for all.

The literature reviewed spans multiple disciplines, including labor studies, psychology, economics, and political science, and reflects a shared understanding of decent work as essential to achieving social justice. Numerous studies highlight the normative basis of decent work, emphasizing how it can reduce structural inequalities and empower marginalized groups.

Devitt (2016) highlights the contribution of decent work to social cohesion, poverty reduction, and dignity, especially for marginalized populations such as women, migrants, and people with disabilities. Balin and Kang (2018) advocate for incorporating the ILO's decent work framework into counseling practices, viewing it as a tool for advancing human welfare and peace. Budwiski, Jany, and Schief (2020) revisit the concept in light of digitalization and care work, arguing for an expanded understanding that addresses gender inequality and informality in labor markets.

From a psychological perspective, Blustein et al. (2016) link decent work to individual well-being and life satisfaction, presenting it as both a personal and societal good. Their work draws from the Psychology of Working Theory, underscoring the role of meaningful employment in fostering justice and human development.

Other studies take a more policy-oriented view. Wickham (2016) positions decent work as central to combating workplace inequality, emphasizing the need for inclusive environments that support both fair treatment and full participation. Koenig (2023) examines the significance of decent work in Nigeria's development agenda, advocating for its role in combating poverty and inequality through gender-sensitive and inclusive policies.

The literature also engages with the role of governments, unions, employer organizations, civil society, and international bodies in operationalizing decent work. Madina (2024) emphasizes that decent work principles must be integrated into national strategies, particularly for vulnerable populations such as youth, women, and migrant workers. Across these texts, decent work is consistently framed as a tool for empowerment, redistribution, and sustainable development.

The Link Between Decent Work and Social Justice

In the literature reviewed, decent work is consistently presented as a fundamental human right and a key mechanism for achieving social justice. Vosko (2002) highlights the ILO's evolving role in promoting decent work amid globalization and technological change, framing it as a central strategy for addressing global inequalities.

Ryder (2017) positions decent work policies as the engine of inclusive growth and social cohesion. He argues that labor protections, combined with targeted social investment, can counteract inequality and strengthen societal resilience. Similarly, Blustein et al. (2016) and Devitt (2016) articulate social justice in terms of equitable access to meaningful work, particularly for marginalized groups.

Koenig (2023) connects decent work to poverty reduction and sustainable development, calling for targeted labor policies that dismantle structural barriers. Trebilcock (2005) expands the discourse to the informal economy, arguing that social justice cannot be achieved without extending decent work protections to informal workers.

The literature also explores intersections between decent work and other dimensions of justice. Budwiski et al. (2020) address gender inequality in care work and informal labor, while Madina (2024) links decent work with environmental sustainability through green jobs and socially responsible industry practices.

Collectively, these studies define social justice as the protection of rights and the fair distribution of resources and opportunities within the world of work. They underscore the importance of regulatory labor standards, safe working environments, and inclusive economic systems in advancing both workplace justice and broader societal equity.

Recommendations

The literature emphasizes the importance of integrating decent work principles into development frameworks at both national and international levels. Ryder (2017) advocates for global cooperation to implement inclusive growth strategies grounded in labor rights, particularly through investments in education, skills development, and social protection.

Koenig (2023) claims that national development strategies—especially in low- and middle-income countries—must prioritize decent work to reduce inequality and promote inclusive economic participation. She calls for targeted interventions for at-risk groups, including women, youth, and migrant workers.

Based on these insights, this review supports the Global Coalition for Social Justice's (GCSJ) decision to uphold decent work as a central organizing principle in its multistakeholder initiatives. The literature supports the GCSJ in providing space for knowledge exchange, aligning with ILO standards, and coordinating labor-focused reforms that directly address inequality in the world of work.

Similarly, the World Summit on Sustainable Development should ensure that commitments to SDG 8 are grounded in concrete measures to expand labor protections, reduce informality, and guarantee the rights of vulnerable workers. Decent work should be integrated into all levels of sustainable development planning, not as a peripheral concern but as a driver of equitable growth.

Both platforms should support coordinated policy action, mobilize technical assistance, and facilitate cross-border cooperation to implement decent work agendas. In doing so, they can help transform decent work from a normative ideal into a practical instrument for achieving social justice on a global scale.

Decent-Affordable Housing and Social Justice *General Characteristics of Topical Content*

The reviewed literature underscores housing as a fundamental global issue of social justice. According to the UN-Habitat Annual Report (2023), 318 million people are currently homeless, while 1.1 billion live in slums or informal settlements. Since 2020, an additional 200 million people have been pushed into slums (UN-Habitat, 2023). These statistics reflect the urgent, multidimensional nature of housing injustice, encompassing the right to housing, affordability, urban inequality, homelessness, and the failures of neoliberal housing policies.

Numerous studies focus on the rights-based and structural dimensions of housing. Adams (2008) examines the philosophical foundations of housing as a human right, while Aribigbola (2011) emphasizes the importance of housing affordability in Nigeria to sustainable development. Anierobi, Nwalusi, et al. (2023) examine social exclusion between formal and informal settlements in Enugu, highlighting how housing inequality impacts spatial justice. Similarly, Bone and O'Reilly (2010) critique the commodification of housing in the UK, linking it to social fragmentation and instability.

Global frameworks, such as those developed by Busch-Geertsema et al. (2016), emphasize the need for systematic tracking of homelessness, noting its global neglect in comparison to other basic needs. The joint report by Habitat for Humanity, UN-Habitat, and UNICEF (2022) addresses the specific housing vulnerabilities of children, drawing attention to key rights frameworks, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Studies from various national contexts provide comparative insights. Hearne and Murphy (2017) critique Ireland's over-reliance on private rental markets, while Jacobs (2019) explores neoliberal housing policy across the U.S., UK, and Australia, arguing that global financial forces deepen housing inequality. Kimhur (2024) proposes a capabilities-based approach to housing justice, suggesting that housing policies should be evaluated based on individual security and opportunity rather than distributive formulas.

Recent research has expanded the housing justice framework to encompass intersections with health, education, and environmental sustainability. Mallach (2020), Soederberg (2017), and Swope and Hernández (2019) demonstrate how housing conditions

directly affect well-being, health equity, and access to opportunity. Springer (2000) and Vissing (2022) link homelessness to children's developmental outcomes and educational inequality.

International and regional studies by Weaver (2018), Dawkins (2021), and Mueller and Rosie (2013) examine the responsibilities of local governments, the role of homeownership policies, and the implications of racial and economic segregation. The literature also includes practical tools, such as the Housing Barometer (UN-Habitat, 2020c), and case studies from New York (Bloom & Lasner, 2019), the UK (Burton, 2003), China (Huang, 2013; Shi et al., 2016), and Singapore (UN-Habitat, 2020a).

The role of housing movements is also well-documented. Irazábal (2018) explores Brazil's MTST movement as a form of "restorative land grab," while Lima (2021) and Chatterjee et al. (2024) highlight activist strategies that link housing justice to wider struggles against neoliberalism and social exclusion. These studies demonstrate how grassroots activism complements institutional policy efforts by redefining housing as a right, rather than a commodity.

The Link Between Decent-Affordable Housing and Social Justice

Many works explicitly define housing as a key dimension of social justice. Vissing (2022) emphasizes that secure, sustainable housing is central to dignity, safety, and health, especially for children. Her work also highlights the connection between housing, education, employment, and community stability. Swope and Hernández (2019) argue that housing inequality contributes to addressing health disparities through affordability, stability, housing quality, and neighborhood opportunity.

The literature also critiques dominant justice frameworks. Watson and Cuervo (2017) challenge resource-based approaches to youth homelessness, drawing on Iris Marion Young's theory to stress subjecthood, self-determination, and the politics of recognition. Similarly, Weaver (2018), building on T.H. Marshall's concept of urban social citizenship, critiques liberal theories of justice for tolerating structural inequality in urban contexts. He proposes a model that focuses on tangible needs and public responsibility in housing provision.

International human rights instruments further institutionalize the right to housing justice. Vissing (2022) lists key treaties that reference housing rights, including the ICESCR (Article 11.1), the CRC (Article 16), and various ILO conventions on workers' housing conditions. Housing rights are also protected under refugee law, humanitarian law, and criminal law instruments such as the Rome Statute. These frameworks affirm housing as a basic component of human dignity and legal protection.

The intersection of housing and justice is also reflected in global initiatives such as the UNECE Geneva Charter (2015), #Housing2030 (2021), and the New Urban Agenda (2016), all of which emphasize inclusive urban development, affordability, and sustainability. These initiatives further underscore the multifaceted role of housing in promoting global justice.

Recommendations

The literature review presents both theoretical frameworks and practical policy guidance for promoting housing justice. Adams (2008) proposes a rights-based model that balances dignity with practical implementation challenges. Kimhur (2024) calls for a shift from distributive approaches to capability-based assessments that emphasize housing opportunity, security, and functionality.

Global initiatives provide further direction. UNECE's #Housing2030 (2021) outlines tools across governance, finance, land policy, and climate-neutrality. The UN-Habitat handbook on land (2020) and expert group reports (2020b) propose comprehensive strategies to combat homelessness through affordable housing and social protection systems. These efforts align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG 11.

Based on these findings, this review supports recommending that the Global Coalition for Social Justice (GCSJ), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and other global policy processes elevate housing within their broader agendas by promoting the implementation of international frameworks such as the Geneva Charter, the New Urban Agenda, and SDG 11. These and other global processes could facilitate cross-regional collaboration on rights-based housing reforms, support the use of UN-Habitat's evaluation tools (e.g., Housing Barometer), and promote capability-based housing assessments in partnership with governments, social partners, and civil society actors. Member states should be encouraged to adopt integrated urban planning policies that prioritize affordability, equity, and environmental sustainability, and focus on populations at risk, including children, refugees, informal settlers, and low-income urban residents. Housing should be emphasized not only as a development goal but as a human right grounded in international law. In fostering multilevel policy dialogue, technical assistance, and rights-based innovation, contemporary international policy processes can help transform housing justice into a central pillar of social justice worldwide.

Digital Divide/Access to Technology and Social Justice

The literature surrounding the digital divide highlights its significant connection to social justice. As access to technology becomes an essential component of daily life, disparities in digital access and literacy create barriers to education, employment, healthcare, and civic participation. These inequities disproportionately impact marginalized communities, including low-income, rural, and racial minority populations, further entrenching broader social inequalities. Common themes across the literature include calls to action for equitable access to technology through policy interventions, infrastructure development, and community-driven solutions, promoting digital inclusion.

General Characteristics of Topical Content

The literature encompasses various studies, case analyses, and institutional reports that examine the intersection of digital exclusion with social justice. Cooper (2021) explores the digital divide in San Francisco, highlighting how limited access to technology deepens socio-economic disparities. Stephens and Marc (n.d.) expand this discussion by linking the digital divide to broader issues such as education and access to essential services. Hardy (2023) emphasizes systemic barriers that hinder marginalized communities from benefiting from digital technologies, while the Internet Society Foundation (2023) underscores the role of digital literacy and affordability in ensuring meaningful access.

Global perspectives also emerge. Iberdrola (2024) examines how socio-economic status and geography impact access to digital resources globally. Singh and Singh (2021) address these challenges in the Indian context, highlighting how unequal digital access hinders social mobility and perpetuates social exclusion.

International organizations, such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations, integrate digital access into their broader development agendas. The ITU defines the digital divide as the gap between those with and without access to ICTs, highlighting its implications for economic development and inclusion. SDG 9 calls for

inclusive and sustainable infrastructure, including expanded digital access, as a means to reduce inequalities and foster innovation.

The Link Between Digital Divide/Access to Technology and Social Justice

Social justice is a recurring theme in digital divide literature. Many scholars explicitly frame digital equity as a fundamental right in the digital era. Cooper (2021) and Hardy (2023) argue that limited digital access perpetuates inequalities in education, employment, and health, highlighting the importance of digital inclusion in advancing social justice. Stephens and Marc (n.d.) highlight digital literacy and infrastructure as foundational to equitable societal participation.

The IEEE Future Network Program (2024) links the digital divide to educational and economic disparities, while the World Science Forum Declaration (2022) emphasizes the necessity of inclusive digital policies to bridge technological gaps in underserved regions.

Across the literature, social justice is conceptualized through shared themes of equity, fairness, and inclusivity. Cooper (2021) frames digital equity as a right, asserting that everyone should have access to the tools and knowledge needed to participate in the digital economy. Stephens and Marc (n.d.) associate social justice with fair resource distribution, directly connecting it to digital access. Krings (2021) positions internet access as a human rights issue, reinforcing its importance in addressing broader societal inequalities.

The Internet Society Foundation (2023) advocates for a multidimensional approach to digital equity, considering affordability, usability, and digital literacy. This comprehensive perspective underscores the need for policies that address both material and structural barriers to digital inclusion.

Singh and Singh (2021) exemplify how rural areas, particularly in India, face compounded exclusion due to limited infrastructure. Hardy (2023) similarly emphasizes how digital barriers hinder marginalized populations from achieving educational and economic advancement, thereby perpetuating social injustice.

Recommendations

Addressing the digital divide is essential for fostering inclusive and equitable societies. Bridging this divide contributes to broader social justice aims, including economic empowerment and universal access to education and healthcare.

The literature strongly supports a multilevel strategy. Cooper (2021) recommends expanding broadband infrastructure and ensuring affordability. Stephens and Marc (n.d.) emphasize the importance of digital literacy programs specifically designed for marginalized communities. Hardy (2023) advocates for public-private partnerships and systemic policy reforms to address infrastructure gaps and provide digital skills training.

At the international level, the IEEE Future Network Program (2024) advocates for coordinated policy efforts that prioritize digital inclusion as part of global development. Singh and Singh (2021) stress the role of community-led initiatives in bridging technological gaps in rural areas. The World Science Forum Declaration (2022) emphasizes ethical governance of technology to ensure that digital innovation aligns with principles of equity and justice.

Together, these findings support the recommendation that the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the World Summit on Social Development prioritize the promotion of digital

inclusion. This would include investment in digital infrastructure, digital literacy initiatives, and equity-focused policy design to ensure that technological progress contributes meaningfully to social justice.

Peacebuilding/ Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Social Justice

The relationship between small arms control, peacebuilding, and social justice is a well-explored area in international relations and development studies. Numerous international organizations, particularly the United Nations, emphasize the critical importance of controlling Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) to foster peace, security, and sustainable development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, n.d.) emphasizes that SALW significantly contribute to violence and instability, particularly in regions affected by conflict. The widespread availability of these weapons hampers socio-economic progress and, consequently, undermines global peacebuilding efforts. Moreover, SALW control is seen as integral to advancing social justice by addressing the systemic inequalities that often fuel conflict and instability. In addition to SALW control, foreign aid plays a crucial role in peacebuilding efforts, particularly when focused on promoting social justice and inclusive development. This literature review examines key definitions and examples to explore the intersection of small arms control, peacebuilding, and social justice.

General Characteristics of Topical Content

The literature on small arms control and peacebuilding is extensive, encompassing academic analyses, case studies, policy reports, and empirical research. According to UNDP, the proliferation of SALW is a major obstacle to peace, security, and sustainable development. The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA), adopted in 2001, focuses on curbing the illicit trade in these weapons and stresses the importance of coordinated national, regional, and global strategies.

Foreign aid is another major component discussed in the literature. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 16, emphasizes the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and the development of effective institutions. Several studies underline that foreign aid in post-conflict contexts must strike a balance between promoting inclusive development and avoiding aid dependency.

The Link Between Peacebuilding / SALW and Social Justice

The literature consistently links SALW control and peacebuilding with social justice, particularly through the lenses of equity, human rights, and the rule of law in post-conflict societies. Social justice is framed as achievable only through inclusive peacebuilding processes that address the root structural inequalities that drive conflict.

Pherali (2021) explores how foreign aid can either promote or undermine social justice depending on its design and implementation. Maber (2019) highlights the role of education in peacebuilding and its link to ethnic and social equity. Connolly and ACCORD (2012) emphasize the importance of post-conflict gender analysis for inclusive governance.

SALW proliferation disproportionately affects already-marginalized communities, intensifying violence, displacement, and insecurity. A ReliefWeb (2014) article advocates for embedding human rights and democratic governance within peacebuilding to secure justice. Tiekou et al. (2021) call for addressing historical injustices to achieve reconciliation and long-term peace.

Transitional justice mechanisms, as described by ECDPM (2014), play a key role in advancing social justice. These mechanisms emphasize accountability and reconciliation to repair societal divisions after conflict. The literature suggests that integrating small arms control with participatory governance, economic equity, and transitional justice is crucial for establishing sustainable peace.

Recommendations

The literature recommends an integrated approach to social justice, peacebuilding, and small arms control. Key strategies include:

- Strengthening international regulatory frameworks,
- Enhancing technical and financial support to SALW-affected regions,
- Promoting participatory governance and transitional justice mechanisms,
- Ensuring that post-conflict reconstruction includes the voices of marginalized communities.

These approaches aim to reduce systemic violence and foster accountability, equity, and reconciliation.

In light of these insights, the literature supports recommending that the Global Coalition for Social Justice (GCSJ) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) include peacebuilding and arms control as core agenda items. These efforts should be framed within the broader pursuit of social justice and aligned with interconnected themes such as human rights, decent work, affordable housing, and sustainable development. Addressing structural injustices and promoting social cohesion in post-conflict situations is essential to realizing a peaceful society.

Social Justice and Sustainable Development

The intersection of sustainable development and social justice is a growing focus in academic literature, policy reports, and case studies. Although still limited in number, the reviewed sources reflect a wide range of subthemes, including the role of governance, Indigenous knowledge systems, and inclusive economic development. These studies underscore the need for sustainability and social justice to be addressed in tandem to achieve fair and lasting outcomes.

General Characteristics of Topical Content

Here we cite a few examples from the 15 items reviewed, as shown in the bibliographical listing below and as will be seen in the full literature survey available online. First, Langhelle (2000) examines sustainable development in the Arctic, where resource exploitation poses a threat to both the environment and Indigenous communities. This article advocates for governance mechanisms that strike a balance between economic goals and Indigenous rights, emphasizing the importance of social justice in regional environmental policy.

Bălăceanu et al. (2012) argue that poverty, inequality, and exclusion must be addressed through fair governance and equitable resource distribution in order to realize sustainability. Similarly, Munasinghe (2019) stresses that the post-COVID world has made the integration of social justice into development strategies even more critical.

Pirini et al. (2023) focus on Indigenous-led economic initiatives as sustainable and socially equitable models. These initiatives emphasize environmental stewardship, community resilience, and intergenerational justice.

Sampson and Fischhoff (2024) examine just climate transitions in Africa, showing that communities least responsible for climate change often suffer its worst consequences. They argue for climate policies that correct such injustices. Finally, Bhuyan (2017) highlights the role of governance in aligning sustainability with equity, contending that sustainable development can only be achieved if its benefits are fairly distributed.

The Link Between Sustainable Development and Social Justice

Most literature agrees that sustainable development is not viable without integrating social justice. Langhelle (2000) ties Indigenous self-determination and participation in governance to environmental sustainability, asserting that social exclusion undermines ecological goals.

Bălăceanu et al. (2012) call for strategies that target inequality and poverty, positioning justice as both a means and an end in sustainability. Pirini et al. (2023) argue that Indigenous approaches to economic development inherently incorporate sustainability principles, underscoring the importance of community-centered solutions. Sampson and Fischhoff (2024) present climate justice as central to sustainable transitions, especially in vulnerable regions.

Across the sources, social justice is framed through values of equity, fairness, participation, and recognition. For example, Langhelle (2000) focuses on Indigenous rights and inclusion in Arctic governance, Bălăceanu et al. (2012) emphasize addressing systemic poverty and exclusion, and Pirini et al. (2023) advocate for empowering marginalized groups through Indigenous economic leadership.

The literature demonstrates that social justice is both a prerequisite and a goal of sustainable development. Langhelle (2000) shows how excluding Indigenous voices in Arctic governance undermines environmental policy. Sampson and Fischhoff (2024) argue that unless Africa's climate transitions prioritize equity, sustainability itself will remain out of reach.

Recommendations

The literature states that sustainability efforts must embed social justice principles to be effective. Inclusive governance, Indigenous rights, and participatory development are key strategic arenas for further research, policy development, and practical action to ensure that sustainability serves all communities, particularly those at risk of exclusion or harm.

Langhelle (2000) recommends multilateral mechanisms that prioritize Indigenous participation. Bălăceanu et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of community-based decision-making and equity-focused resource allocation policies. Munasinghe (2019) calls for recovery policies that reduce inequality and improve access to environmental and economic resources. Pirini et al. (2023) advocate for the recognition of Indigenous rights in economic planning as a path to both justice and sustainability. Sampson and Fischhoff (2024) underscore the importance of international funding and solidarity in achieving climate justice in Africa.

In light of this literature, the Global Coalition for Social Justice (GCSJ) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) should frame sustainable development not only as an ecological issue but also as a justice imperative. Social justice must guide climate transitions, economic planning, and development cooperation. This includes equitable policy

frameworks, the protection of Indigenous and marginalized communities, and shared governance models that align with global sustainability goals.

Overall Conclusions

The seven thematic areas examined in this analytical literature review—drawn from a broader mapping of 40 topical social justice domains—illustrate both the specificity and interrelatedness of the challenges to realizing social justice globally. A unifying insight across these diverse areas is the central role of international normative frameworks, particularly human rights conventions and International Labour Standards—specifically the Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). These instruments provide not only guiding ethical principles but also serve as operational benchmarks for evaluating progress related to justice across sectors.

A key finding from this review is that social justice must be understood and approached as a multidimensional and integrative concept. In health, work, housing, technology, peacebuilding, and sustainability, the literature repeatedly highlights overlapping systems of exclusion and structural inequality. Across these domains, social justice is consistently articulated not only as a normative ideal but as a practical agenda requiring institutional, legal, and policy transformation.

In the realm of human rights, the reviewed literature advocates for a more inclusive and empowered application of rights frameworks—ones that explicitly confront economic inequality and systemic discrimination. Human rights are positioned as tools to implement social justice, particularly when integrated into labor, health, and development strategies.

In health, justice is grounded in ethical reasoning, the social determinants of health, and intersectional frameworks. The literature supports models of shared health governance, linking personal and collective responsibility to structural reforms that address entrenched disparities and promote equitable access to care.

Regarding decent work, the literature frames labor rights as foundational to social justice. It highlights the urgent need to embed decent work principles in national and global development agendas to ensure fair treatment, income security, and workplace dignity, particularly for marginalized populations, including migrants, women, and young people.

The analysis of housing reveals it as both a fundamental right and a structural condition shaping life opportunities. Secure, affordable, and dignified housing is portrayed as a prerequisite for realizing other rights, including education, health, and employment, with calls for a rights-based, capability-oriented, and participatory housing policy approach.

In the area of the digital divide, the literature emphasizes that equitable access to digital infrastructure and skills is no longer optional but a prerequisite for social inclusion, education, employment, and democratic participation. Digital equity is increasingly viewed as a contemporary expression of the right to participation and opportunity in society.

The review of peacebuilding and small arms control (SALW) literature highlights that addressing root causes of conflict—including inequality, exclusion, and historical injustice—is vital for sustainable peace. The literature emphasizes the importance of embedding justice and accountability into disarmament and post-conflict reconstruction processes, positioning these as central to achieving equitable and lasting peace.

Ultimately, in the context of sustainable development, the literature demonstrates that environmental and economic objectives must be inextricably linked to social justice principles.

Inclusive governance, recognition of Indigenous rights, and equitable distribution of benefits are repeatedly emphasized as essential to ensuring sustainability outcomes are both just and effective.

Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of integrating these thematic areas in agendas of the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the Second World Summit for Social Development. Such integration would contribute to building coherent and action-oriented strategies for advancing social justice globally, drawing on robust normative foundations and responding to lived realities across diverse social, economic, and geopolitical contexts.

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