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Impact of ideological conflict on the mental health of library workers in the United States: A systematized scoping review.

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ABSTRACT

Impact of ideological conflict on the mental health of library workers in the United States:
A systematized scoping review.

By

Beth Havas

Wednesday, 23 April 2025

This systematized scoping review aims to identify whether and to what extent the literature addresses mental health impacts of ideological challenges toward library workers in the United States. Library staff have experienced increased ideological challenges to their collections and programming, often the result of real or perceived differences in political, religious, or moral ideologies and personal beliefs on matters of race, gender, sexuality, and the concept of “obscenity.” The intensity of these challenges ranges from social media name-calling and organized protests to legislation and challenges for public office, and even physical violence in some cases. Databases including library science, business, and psychology topics were searched for peer reviewed articles, editorials, conference proceedings, theses, and dissertations among academic and trade titles published in English from 2020-2024, with additional resources identified by hand searching specific journal titles and references. Results show that the literature is somewhat scarce regarding the mental health impacts of ideological challenges on library workers, despite a fuller body of discussion regarding general workplace mental health challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Available literature shows that library staff are indeed at risk for various types of moral injury and poor mental health outcomes following ideological challenges and related aggressive behavior, in addition to physical symptoms of the mental burden. However, there are also multiple reports of library staff reacting to these challenges with a renewed sense of personal vigor and motivation toward their work, illustrating key differences in outcomes that should be further explored in future research.

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A systematized scoping review.

By

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MPH, Georgia State University

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APPROVAL PAGE

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Author's Statement Page

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Beth Havas

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

The average American employee spends approximately 35 hours per week at work, with many library staff members exceeding 40 hours, including nights, weekends, and holidays, to meet the needs of their students, institutions, and communities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024; Statista, 2024). Given how much of a person's waking life is spent in the workplace, it is unsurprising that workplace environments and cultures significantly influence employees' mental health and overall well-being (Faragher et al., 2005). Stress, uncertainty, and interpersonal conflict in professional settings can lead to symptoms of anxiety and depression, especially for employees from marginalized backgrounds who also navigate identity-related stressors and microaggressions (Ramirez & Galupo, 2019; Schmidt et al., 2014; Velez et al., 2013).

Workplace stress is not only a mental health concern but also a broader public health issue, as chronic mental health challenges are often comorbid with physical conditions. A New York City community health survey found that individuals reporting mental and emotional distress were three times more likely to report poor overall health, with associated physical symptoms and higher engagement in health-risk behaviors. Extensive research has also demonstrated strong correlations between mental health disorders—such as depression and anxiety—and serious physical illnesses, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, asthma, and cancer (Colligan & Higgins, 2006; World Health Organization, 2005).

In libraries, where equity, access, and support are foundational values, staff members increasingly find themselves at the center of ideological and cultural conflict. These tensions often stem from external groups or individuals who view the library or its materials as opposing their personal beliefs—whether political, religious, or moral—and respond with demands for censorship or corrective action. This broader sociopolitical hostility is reflected in rising rates of extremist activity nationwide. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported a 357% increase in open domestic terrorism cases between 2013 and 2021, with investigations more than doubling between 2020 and 2023. Racially motivated extremists were identified as the most violent perpetrators during this period (Government Accountability Office, 2023). Concurrently,

between 2017 and 2021, the United States saw a 93% rise in reported homicides of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2024).

While high-profile cases often garner national attention, they represent only the most visible signs of a broader ideological escalation. One notable indicator is the surge in attempts to censor or ban materials in libraries—especially those covering race, gender identity, and LGBTQ+ themes, which are also disproportionately represented among the targets of violent extremism. The American Library Association reported that challenges to library content increased fivefold by 2022 compared to pre-2020 levels, as illustrated in Figure D1 (American Library Association, 2025a).

The rising ideological polarization in the United States presents significant occupational health risks to library staff, linking mental health strain with broader public and workplace health concerns. Existing literature on library worker mental health has primarily focused on factors such as functional workplace challenges and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic—both of which remain relevant—but there is a noticeable gap in scholarship specifically addressing the mental health effects of ideological conflict within the workplace.

This systematized scoping review aims to explore emerging literature that addresses how the current ideological climate affects the mental and emotional well-being of library workers. It seeks to identify prevailing themes, evaluate the state of current research, and highlight areas where further investigation is needed to understand the impact of sociopolitical stressors on the health of library staff across public, academic, and school libraries.

CHAPTER II – MATERIALS AND METHODS

This systematized scoping review was conducted using guidance from the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) and the *Joanna Briggs Institute Manual for Evidence Synthesis*, with adaptations appropriate for systematized review methodology and production as a graduate program project by a single author (Grant & Booth, 2009; Peters et al., 2024; Tricco et al., 2018). A protocol was not registered. The completed PRISMA-ScR checklist for this review is available in Appendix A.

Eligibility Criteria

This review aims to explore the scope and nature of literature addressing the impact of modern ideological conflict and aggression on library workers within the United States. Inclusion criteria required that studies be:

- Conducted within the United States,
- Published in English, and
- Dated between **January 2020 and December 2024**, to reflect the increasing relevance of recent sociopolitical dynamics and the documented surge in library-related ideological challenges beginning in 2020 (American Library Association, 2025a).

Included sources comprised both peer-reviewed academic articles and relevant professional literature from trade publications, such as original research, reviews, editorials, conference proceedings, abstracts, and academic dissertations.

Further inclusion criteria involved:

- **Library type:** public, academic, or school libraries;
- **Library worker type:** professional librarians, paraprofessionals, and other library staff;
- **Type of ideological challenge:** including political, social, religious, or moral opposition.

For the purposes of this review, *ideological challenges* or *ideological aggression* refer to hostile or threatening actions, statements, or accusations directed at individuals or institutions based on perceived ideological differences.

Search Strategy

Search terms were developed to reflect three primary concepts: the library workforce, mental/emotional health or distress, and ideological conflict or aggression. Initial test searches were conducted to refine search terms for precision and relevancy, with iterative updates to incorporate commonly associated language and terminology.

Database searches prioritized abstract fields (when available) to limit unrelated results and improve specificity. Where abstract-only searches were not supported, full-text keyword searches were performed. Truncation and Boolean operators were used to capture variations and related concepts. Figure D2 illustrates a sample query from APA PsycInfo; the full list of database-specific search queries is available in Table C1.

Information Sources

Searches were conducted through a combination of publicly available resources and Georgia State University subscription databases accessible via the University Library. The following databases were selected for their relevance to library science, psychology, and workplace studies:

- APA PsycInfo
- Business Source Complete
- Dissertations & Theses A&I
- Library, Information Science, and Technology Abstracts (LISTA)
- Library Science Database
- OAlster
- Web of Science

Initial database searches were completed 26 February 2025. Additional literature was located through hand searching of citation lists, targeted journal titles, and publisher websites, supplemented by Google Scholar. Three resource authors—Leah Dudak of Syracuse University, Jieun Yeon of the University of Maryland, and Alejandro Marquez of the University of Denver—were contacted directly via email for access and further detail regarding three cited works (Dudak & Yeon, 2024; Marquez, 2024; Yeon & Dudak, 2024).

Literature Selection Process

Search results were imported into Zotero for citation management and deduplication (Corporation for Digital Scholarship, 2024). The deduplicated dataset was then exported to the Rayyan platform for systematic screening (Rayyan, 2025). The selection process followed these steps:

1. Initial exclusion of items not meeting basic eligibility (e.g., non-English, non-U.S., non-qualifying publication types),
2. Title and abstract screening based on relevance to the eligibility criteria,
3. Full-text screening of remaining records for thematic alignment and inclusion.

Hand-searched records were evaluated using the same criteria. A complete summary of the screening process and selection flow is provided in Appendix B.

Data Extraction Process

A structured data extraction table was developed to capture key attributes and thematic content from each included source (see Table 2). Coded categories were developed by the author to capture frequently observed and topically relevant concepts for each element of study; however, the categories included are not exhaustive. Extracted data included:

- Author(s)
- Year of publication
- Publication type (academic, trade, dissertation)
- Library type (public, school, academic)

- Content challenged (e.g., race/ethnicity, stereotypes, sexual/reproductive topics, gender, LGBTQ+, offensive language)
- Target of challenge (e.g., collection, display, program, staff, governance)
- Type of interaction (e.g., remote or direct challenge, stalking or publicly exposing sensitive personal information/ “doxxing”, legislative action, legal proceedings)
- Outcomes reported (e.g., workplace changes, anxiety, depression, burnout, sleep disruption, physical health symptoms, loss of employment/funding, or positive responses like increased motivation)

Where applicable, overlapping or related concepts—such as gender and LGBTQ+ issues, or race and stereotyping—were recorded distinctly when specified as such in the source material, to maintain fidelity to original author intent. Structured critical appraisal tools were not utilized due to time constraints.

Synthesis of Results

Results were organized based on thematic alignments across key topic categories, including elements of the presentation, management, and outcomes of ideological conflicts. Additionally, studies were grouped according to population and publication characteristics, such as the type of libraries discussed and whether empirical data were included. Findings are synthesized narratively and supported by tables and figures, referenced in the Results and Discussion sections.

CHAPTER III – RESULTS

Selection of Sources of Evidence

An initial pool of 550 sources was retrieved from database searches, with the highest yields from the *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts* (119 sources), *Dissertations & Theses A&I* (111 sources), and *Web of Science* (108 sources). Following deduplication, sources underwent Title/Abstract screening and Full-Text review, resulting in 140 sources. An additional 11 database sources—initially lacking full-text access—were subsequently retrieved and screened using the same process. Furthermore, 30 additional citations were identified through manual searches of *The Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, *The Political Librarian*, *Library Philosophy & Practice*, and reference list mining. After screening these sources, and the elimination of 3 hand-searched citations due to lack of full text access in the allotted time for this review, a total of 22 sources were included in the final review. Comprehensive details on the selection process are provided in Appendix B.

Publication Characteristics

Although the search encompassed the full four-year period from January 2020 through December 2024, literature specifically addressing the mental health impacts of ideological challenges on library workers appeared almost exclusively in the latter half of the review period. As shown in Figure D3, no relevant publications were identified for 2020 or 2021. In contrast, two publications emerged in 2022 (Kitzie et al., 2022; Morehart, 2022), followed by a sharp increase of eleven publications in 2023 (Cockcroft, 2023; Crowley, 2023; Czarnecki, 2023; Hazelton-Boyle & Hazelton-Boyle, 2023; Hinds, 2023; Jennings-Roche, 2023; Kohlburn, 2023; Schattle, 2023; Suzuki et al., 2023; Ward, 2023; Witteveen, 2023) and continued growth among nine publications in 2024 (Albanese, 2024; Dudak & Yeon, 2024; Fredericks, 2024; Padrón, 2024; A. Phillips, 2024; J. Phillips et al., 2024; Pitts, 2024; Woodward, 2024; Yeon & Dudak, 2024).

The distribution of publication types was nearly even between 9 academic sources (Crowley, 2023; Hazelton-Boyle & Hazelton-Boyle, 2023; Jennings-Roche, 2023; Kitzie et al., 2022; Kohlburn, 2023; Padrón, 2024; A. Phillips, 2024; J. Phillips et al., 2024; Yeon & Dudak, 2024) and 10 sources among professional trade literature (Albanese, 2024; Cockcroft, 2023; Czarnecki,

2023; Dudak & Yeon, 2024; Fredericks, 2024; Hinds, 2023; Morehart, 2022; Suzuki et al., 2023; Ward, 2023; Witteveen, 2023), with an additional three academic dissertations (Pitts, 2024; Schattle, 2023; Woodward, 2024) also meeting criteria (see Figure D4). While many sources were composed of editorials, narrative analyses, or commentaries, seven studies reported empirical findings, primarily through surveys or qualitative interviews, and are detailed further in Tables C2 and C3.

The most productive databases for relevant and closely aligned topics were those within library science and psychology disciplines, including *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts*, *Library Science Database*, *APA PsycInfo*, and *Web of Science*. Together, these collections yielded approximately 73% of total initial results. By contrast, the *Business Source Complete* database returned just 7% of total results, capturing roughly one-third to one-half the number of items found through any of the other individual databases.

Challenged Topics

Across all library types, the most frequently cited ideological challenge pertained to LGBTQ+ topics—including representation of LGBTQ+ authors and characters in books, events centered around LGBTQ+ individuals, and library employees who identify within the LGBTQ+ community. Over three-quarters of sources—83%—referred to challenges of this type of content or topic.

Following LGBTQ+ topics were challenges specifically related to race (64%), sexual content or sexual reproductive information (45%), and gender (36%), often targeting materials featuring Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) or narratives that center on BIPOC perspectives and lived experiences. These ideological challenges typically manifested through objections to books and other materials in library collections, though programs, events, and even library staff themselves were also common targets.

Four sources cited other specific subjects including police brutality or anti-police sentiment, slavery or history topics, and witchcraft, although in many cases these can also be associated with broader previous categories.

Targets of Challenges

The reported targets of challenges varied among sources. Almost all sources included reports of challenges on individual book titles or library collections to some degree, and over half included reports of challenges toward library employees themselves:

- Books and/or library collections (91%)
- Library employees (64%)
- Events or activities (23%)
- Displays or exhibits (18%)
- The library's board or legislative body (18%)

Modes of Challenge and Actions

Challenges were most often initiated through remote means, such as social media posts, emails, and phone calls (68%), although in-person confrontations—including those at board meetings—were also documented (45%). Notably, 55% of sources described punitive legislative or policy actions at various levels of government, which aimed to regulate or restrict library collections, programming, or operations. Among other modes of challenges—23% reported stalking or doxxing of employees, 18% reported judicial actions, and another 68% included additional unspecified modes of challenge.

Reported Outcomes

Reported outcomes revealed a range of mental, emotional, and physical effects on library staff. Commonly observed or self-reported specified symptoms and consequences included the following:

- Changes in workplace behavior, including acts of self-censorship (73%)
- Burnout and/or loss of professional satisfaction (59%)
- Loss of library funding and/or employment (55%)
- Fatigue, exhaustion, and/or loss of sleep (45%)

- Anxiety and/or depression (41%)
- Physical manifestations of stress demonstrated by the requirement of new treatment, medication prescriptions, or hospitalization for stress-related anxiety, depression, panic attacks, heart palpitations, high blood pressure, or vertigo (18%)

Changes in workplace behavior and anxiety symptoms were among the most frequently cited effects, underscoring the widespread impact of these ideological pressures on day-to-day professional life. Most of these outcomes regarding mental health and workplace functions closely aligned with mental health are negative in nature, although it is quite notable that positive emotional responses in the form of renewed or increased personal motivation or community-oriented inspiration were reported among 18% of sources.

The data shows that reviewed sources primarily report challenges toward book titles and library employees themselves. The primary subjects cited in these challenges include LGBTQ+ identity or topics, as well as associations of race or ethnicity. Most challenges are initiated outside the library instead of face-to-face with library staff. A large number of reports detail negative mental health effects and workplace changes, despite existing additional reports of positive mental health effects. Full data for the studies included is presented in Table C2.

CHAPTER IV – DISCUSSION

Quantity & Depth of Literature

Despite the increasing prevalence of ideological conflict in the contemporary sociopolitical climate of the United States, the volume of literature directly addressing its mental health impacts on library workers remains limited. Few works met all inclusion criteria—specifically regarding time frame, geographic location, and topical relevance—over the review period of 2020 to 2024. This scarcity may be attributed in part to the sensitive nature of the subject matter. Ideological conflict often involves deeply held personal beliefs, and such topics can be difficult for researchers to study due to potential discomfort among respondents, resistance from institutional review boards, or concerns about professional repercussions within workplaces. These factors may discourage open discourse, candid participation, or institutional support for publication.

The American Library Association (2025a) provided key data informing the timeframe of this review, documenting a sharp increase in reported book challenges beginning in 2020. Nevertheless, much of the literature from 2020–2021 continued to focus on COVID-19-related stressors in library work or longstanding concerns around workplace mental health, rather than the more recent surge in political, religious, and moral challenges. This delay in topical focus is likely a reflection of the overwhelming and immediate impact of the pandemic, which temporarily eclipsed other emerging workplace issues. The global health crisis disrupted all sectors, making it difficult for researchers to isolate and study new sociopolitical stressors while pandemic-related challenges were still deeply unfolding.

Several major sociopolitical events have since contributed to a shifting national climate, including the widespread denial of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, the January 6th Capitol attack, and a range of high-profile legislative and grassroots actions opposing what has been termed “woke” ideology. These events appear to have contributed to a tipping point in public discourse, with ideological challenges in libraries receiving more academic and professional attention beginning in 2022.

While discourse surrounding the mental and emotional impacts of ideological hostility on library workers now appears in both trade publications and peer-reviewed journals, empirical research remains relatively scarce, as illustrated in Table C3. Only two of the seven survey-based studies were published in academic outlets (Kitzie et al., 2022; Kohlburn, 2023), with the remaining studies drawn from doctoral dissertations and professional trade surveys (Cockcroft, 2023; Pitts, 2024; Schattle, 2023; Suzuki et al., 2023; Woodward, 2024).

The largest sample among these, from the 2023 School Library Journal Controversial Books Survey, yielded 729 responses—a small fraction of the estimated 98,500 school libraries in the United States, indicating limited representation (American Library Association, 2023; Cockcroft, 2023).

Sample size limitations are compounded by a narrow focus on credentialed professional librarians, typically those holding a master's degree in library and information science. While these professionals often serve in decision-making roles and directly confront content challenges, paraprofessional and support staff—who frequently hold front-line, public-facing roles—are also significantly impacted and may face even greater exposure to hostility. However, these groups are underrepresented in the existing survey study literature (Kohlburn, 2023; Schattle, 2023; Suzuki et al., 2023; Woodward, 2024).

Many editorials and narrative analyses included in the review also lacked specific detail regarding the content or nature of ideological challenges. This was especially true in shorter trade publications, which tended to emphasize general wellness strategies and motivational messaging rather than engage deeply with the political or sociocultural dimensions of ideological aggression (Fredericks, 2024; A. Phillips, 2024; Ward, 2023). While resources such as de-escalation tips and stress management advice are valuable, they do not offer a sufficient analytical framework for understanding the broader context of ideological conflict or its targeted impact on library professionals and institutions.

Precursors to Mental Health Outcomes

Library Faith & Vocational Awe

Among the literature reviewed, two conceptual frameworks—library faith and vocational awe—emerged as foundational to understanding the professional culture and intrinsic motivations of library staff, particularly in the context of ideological conflict. These concepts illuminate not only the ideals that draw individuals into library work but also the internalized expectations that may contribute to vulnerability in the face of sociopolitical hostility.

The notion of library faith dates back to the mid-twentieth century and is defined as a “belief in the virtue of the printed word especially of the book, the reading of which is held to be good in itself or from its reading flows that which is good” (Leigh, 1950). This perspective reflects a broadly secular reverence for the library as a civic institution—a cornerstone of democracy, knowledge, and intellectual freedom. As such, librarianship is often viewed not merely as a profession, but as a vocation—akin to teaching, healthcare, or religious service—imbued with personal significance and a deep sense of purpose (Fredericks, 2024). For many library workers, their role is closely tied to values such as literacy, access to information, free speech, and equity, which contribute to a sense of mission and moral alignment (D’Angelos, 2023). This philosophical underpinning is echoed in the mission of the American Library Association (ALA), which explicitly ties its professional values to democratic ideals. The ALA affirms that:

[T]he rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely [are] guaranteed by the First Amendment. Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession, and a basic right in our democratic society. A publicly supported library provides free, equitable, and confidential access to information for all people of its community (American Library Association, 2024).

From these principles of library faith arises the closely related concept of vocational awe, a term coined by Fobazi Ettarh. Vocational awe refers to: “the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in notions that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred notions, and therefore beyond critique” (Ettarh, 2018). Together, library faith and vocational awe construct a professional identity wherein the library is

seen as a sacred space and library work as a form of sacred duty. This internalized perception fosters dedication, resilience, and personal investment, but it also introduces significant risks—particularly when ideological attacks or societal pressures challenge the very ideals upon which this identity is built.

These frameworks, while deeply motivating, can create conditions for chronic overextension and emotional labor. The moral imperative associated with vocational awe often encourages staff to suppress personal needs or discomforts, especially in the face of emotionally charged or even hostile encounters with patrons, community members, or policymakers (Colon-Aguirre & Webb, 2020; Woodward, 2024). This is compounded by structural issues within the profession, including low compensation, job precarity, and unrealistic expectations, which are often normalized or dismissed under the guise of professional dedication (Glusker et al., 2022; J. Phillips et al., 2024).

Similar trends are observed in other “caring” professions, such as education and healthcare, where workers experience burnout, compassion fatigue, and mental health strain tied to idealized or self-sacrificial roles. Within librarianship, these dynamics are intensified when ideological aggression targets the very values that constitute the foundation of library faith and vocational awe, forcing workers to defend not only their professional responsibilities but their deeply held beliefs.

While library faith and vocational awe serve as sources of professional pride and purpose, they also represent psychosocial precursors to mental health outcomes. When library workers are placed in ideological crosshairs—particularly without institutional or community support—the emotional toll is amplified by their internalized sense of duty and the sacred framing of their work.

Moral Injury

A recurring concept throughout the literature is that of moral injury, a psychological harm that arises when individuals are forced to act—or refrain from acting—in ways that violate their personal or professional moral frameworks. Defined as “a betrayal of an individual’s personal or professional values or beliefs by authority figures, coworkers, users, and workplaces” (Fredericks, 2024; Marquez, 2024), moral injury has increasingly been applied to workplace settings where values-based conflicts are frequent and intense. In the library context, such injury may stem from several distinct experiences, including:

- Being compelled to act against one’s own beliefs (either overtly or through coercive policy),
- Failing to intervene or “do enough” in the face of injustice, and
- Witnessing the mistreatment of others, particularly patrons or colleagues from marginalized backgrounds (Syracuse University, 2020).

Recent ideological challenges within the library landscape—primarily targeting content related to LGBTQ+ identities, BIPOC narratives, and sexual health or education—often frame objections in terms of “parental rights,” “religious freedom,” or “moral standards.” These arguments position individual belief systems in opposition to the intellectual freedom that underpins library services. Such friction undermines the philosophical and ethical foundation of library work, particularly for staff whose professional identity is shaped by principles of equity, access, and inclusion.

The American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights (2025b), originally adopted in 1939 and last amended in 2019, outlines the moral structure guiding library services. It affirms that collections should serve the entire community, provide equitable representation of viewpoints, resist censorship, and uphold the privacy and intellectual freedom of all users. When ideological challengers seek to remove or restrict access to materials that reflect diverse identities or perspectives—based on subjective discomfort or disapproval—they directly contravene these ethical commitments. For library workers who are charged with defending these values, such

challenges not only disrupt daily operations but also trigger moral injury, especially when staff are required to comply with censorship, remain silent, or witness their colleagues or patrons being targeted.

Moral injury in this setting is amplified by the previously discussed constructs of library faith and vocational awe, which can heighten personal identification with professional values and intensify emotional vulnerability. When core beliefs—such as the right to read, the value of inclusive representation, or the neutrality of public spaces—are undermined by policies or community actions, the psychological consequences can include guilt, shame, disillusionment, and even identity crisis within one’s profession. These effects may occur independently or in conjunction with broader symptoms of burnout and compassion fatigue, which are prevalent across other values-driven or caregiving professions (e.g., education, healthcare, social work).

The sociopolitical context in which library workers operate has become increasingly volatile, marked by ideological polarization and cultural conflict at local, state, and national levels. Library staff often find themselves at the intersection of these tensions—navigating legislative pressure, public hostility, school board scrutiny, and community discord—while attempting to uphold the ethical standards of their profession. In such an environment, moral injury is not an abstract or rare occurrence, but rather a systemic occupational hazard that demands further research, institutional recognition, and preventative support mechanisms.

LGBTQ+ and Race Topics

The most frequently cited subjects of ideological challenges in the reviewed literature were topics related to LGBTQ+ identities and race or ethnicity. As illustrated in Figure D5, nearly all sources examined in this review identified one or both themes as central to the content being contested—excluding only a few publications that did not specify challenge areas in detail.

These findings mirror national trends and reflect a broader cultural climate in which expressions of identity—especially those deviating from white, cisgender, heterosexual norms—are increasingly politicized and subject to scrutiny.

While topics such as gender identity and sexual content were coded separately when explicitly named, there is likely considerable overlap between these categories and the broader LGBTQ+

and racial discourse. For example, current sociopolitical rhetoric often conflates gender diversity with sexual behavior, leading to the oversexualization and stigmatization of LGBTQ+ individuals and communities. This dynamic may obscure more nuanced content distinctions but reinforces the idea that challenges to LGBTQ+ materials are rarely about content alone—they are frequently attacks on identity and existence (Kitzie et al., 2022).

The reviewed literature suggests that challenges can be categorized into two distinct forms:

1. Content Censorship – where specific materials such as books, programs, or displays are targeted due to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ or BIPOC themes, characters, or narratives.
2. Identity Censorship – in which the presence of individuals themselves (e.g., LGBTQ+ staff members, guest speakers, or authors of color) becomes the focus of public opposition or administrative suppression (Suzuki et al., 2023).

This distinction is crucial, as the latter form—identity censorship—extends the nature of the ideological conflict beyond collections or programming into the personhood of library staff and collaborators. It reflects a dehumanizing logic in which representation itself becomes objectionable, regardless of the message or context. As noted by Becnel and Moeller (2021) and further evidenced by the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (2025), institutions have defended materials and programs “solely because they contain LGBTQIA+ characters,” or because participants themselves identify as LGBTQIA+, regardless of the content being presented. This trend highlights a growing intolerance not merely toward specific content, but toward the inclusion of diverse identities in public spaces.

The implications of such challenges are far-reaching for library workers, particularly those who share the identities being targeted. In addition to navigating professional duties amid public and administrative scrutiny, these employees may also experience the stress of personal invalidation, targeted harassment, or internalized stigma, which can compound the emotional toll of their work. When ideological objections conflate representation with indoctrination or visibility with provocation, the line between professional responsibilities and personal identity becomes increasingly blurred—and increasingly fraught.

In this climate, the act of curating inclusive collections or hosting community-centered events can be perceived as a form of activism, regardless of intention. For many library workers, this introduces a precarious dynamic in which fulfilling the mission of equitable service becomes a source of conflict, vulnerability, and emotional strain—particularly when those missions are questioned, politicized, or suppressed from outside forces.

Challenges Based on Assumptions

A notable trend identified in the reviewed literature is the frequency of ideological challenges initiated without full engagement with the content in question (Cockcroft, 2023; Padrón, 2024; Pitts, 2024). These assumption-based challenges often originate from individuals who did not read the entire work—if any portion at all—or who did not attend the program, event, or exhibit being contested. This pattern underscores a concerning disconnect between the rationale provided by challengers and the actual substance of the material under review.

This type of identity censorship reflects a broader ideological strategy that targets representation or perceived ideological leanings rather than actual harm or inappropriate content. The tendency to object to content based solely on excerpts, titles, or hearsay fosters an environment in which context and nuance are discarded in favor of reactive judgment, often rooted in fear, prejudice, or misinformation.

Deborah Caldwell-Stone, Director of the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, illustrates this issue poignantly in a 2022 interview with *The New York Times*. Responding to efforts to censor Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Caldwell-Stone remarked, “If you focus on five passages, you’ve got obscenity. If you broaden your view and read the work as a whole, you’ve got Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*” (Harris & Alter, 2022).

Her observation captures the reductive lens through which many challenges are framed— isolating provocative or uncomfortable excerpts without considering literary, educational, or cultural value. Such fragmentary readings risk stripping complex narratives of their full meaning, particularly in works designed to challenge social norms, explore trauma, or amplify marginalized voices.

The consequences of assumption-based challenges extend beyond the misrepresentation of content. They pose significant professional and emotional challenges for library workers, who are expected to defend intellectual freedom and uphold collection development policies in the face of mounting public pressure. When materials are challenged not because of their content but because of what they are assumed to represent, library staff are forced into defensive positions against ideological attacks that often lack substantive engagement with the material.

Furthermore, the prevalence of such challenges undermines principles of open inquiry, critical thinking, and democratic access to information. It also places disproportionate strain on staff tasked with mediating disputes, responding to public concerns, and protecting both the rights of patrons and the integrity of library collections. The psychological toll of this labor, especially when confronted with accusations untethered from facts, contributes to stress, burnout, and moral injury—themes consistently echoed across the literature on library worker wellbeing.

Ultimately, assumption-based challenges exemplify the broader climate of ideological polarization impacting library systems today. As materials are judged not on their content but on their potential to disrupt preconceived norms or values, the library's role as a neutral provider of diverse perspectives becomes increasingly vulnerable to misinterpretation, politicization, and erasure.

Behavioral Changes Due to Legislation, Policy and/or Self-censorship

The effects of ideological aggression extend beyond public controversy and into the daily professional lives of library workers, particularly through changes in behavior, policy, and practice that reflect either institutional coercion or personal self-censorship. These shifts often contribute to moral injury, as library staff are compelled to act against their own professional and ethical convictions, or refrain from supporting causes and communities they personally value (Fredericks, 2024).

Among school librarians surveyed in 2023, 37% reported that ideological challenges influenced their purchasing decisions, reflecting a 10% increase from the prior year. More than half of respondents also noted that their schools had revised or implemented new procedures for handling book challenges—another increase from just under half of respondents in 2022

(Cockcroft, 2023). These procedural and behavioral changes signal a troubling trend in which public pressure and political rhetoric appear to override professional standards and expertise. In many cases, library staff are forced to modify collection development plans, adjust programming, or cancel events, not due to professional assessment but due to fear of backlash, loss of support, or reputational harm.

This erosion of professional autonomy is often compounded by direct political interference or punitive policy actions. A particularly striking example occurred when the Missouri Library Association defended challenged materials across its network of libraries, prompting the state legislature to retaliate by cutting \$4.5 million from public library funding (Hazelton-Boyle & Hazelton-Boyle, 2023). Such financial threats demonstrate the power of legislative bodies to exert ideological influence through economic coercion, pressuring libraries to conform to political agendas under the guise of oversight or budgetary discretion.

In some cases, the consequences for resisting such pressures go beyond funding or administrative inconvenience—extending into personal and professional risk. Library administrators and frontline staff have faced organized harassment campaigns, forced resignations, and termination as a result of refusing to comply with politically motivated censorship demands. These conditions are further intensified by laws and policies that criminalize certain information-sharing activities, creating environments in which even providing patrons with accurate information may be construed as a punishable offense.

One such example took place in Oklahoma in July 2022, when the Metropolitan Library System prohibited staff from responding to inquiries about abortion-related information. Under the threat of termination, civil fines, and even jail time, library employees were ordered to avoid engaging in discussions on a legally and ethically complex issue (Hazelton-Boyle & Hazelton-Boyle, 2023). For many library workers, these mandates conflict with deeply held values about intellectual freedom, access to information, and community service, placing them in the untenable position of choosing between professional integrity and job security.

These policies not only undermine the core values of librarianship, such as equity, open access, and the right to information, but also significantly contribute to the emotional and psychological

distress experienced by library staff. When legislation and institutional policies force workers to prioritize self-protection over public service, the result is a silencing of both professional expertise and personal conviction. Over time, these conditions contribute to burnout, anxiety, moral injury, and erosion of trust in both the institution and the broader democratic structures meant to support it.

Verbal and Physical Attacks

The intensifying wave of ideological aggression in the United States has led not only to professional and ethical disruptions within library environments but also to direct verbal and physical threats against library staff. This pattern of hostility contributes significantly to moral injury, particularly in the form of witnessing or being the target of abusive behavior from others (Fredericks, 2024). When ideological disagreements escalate into personal harassment, gaslighting, and physical intimidation, library staff find themselves navigating a workplace climate marked by fear, hostility, and uncertainty—conditions with severe implications for mental health and occupational wellbeing.

The literature reveals that library workers are increasingly targeted for personal harassment by individuals and organized groups, often in connection with the presence of certain materials or programming, such as LGBTQ+-themed books, educational displays, or inclusive events. These attacks are not confined to civil discourse or professional disagreement; rather, they frequently manifest through inflammatory and accusatory language, both in person and online. For instance, library staff have reported being labeled with stigmatizing and dangerous accusations such as “pedophile,” “pornographer,” or “groomer,” language that inflames public sentiment and amplifies reputational and physical risk (Cockcroft, 2023).

The scope of harassment sometimes escalates to doxxing, or the unauthorized release of personal information with malicious intent. In one particularly alarming case, a library worker in Washington received an anonymous phone call to the library threatening his spouse by name—an act that underscores the potential for violence stemming from ideological opposition (Cockcroft, 2023).

A notable pattern identified in the literature involves “gaslighting” behaviors by challengers—individuals who allege harmful content in a library’s collection despite having no direct knowledge or experience of the material in question. In these cases, library staff are accused of promoting obscenity or dangerous ideologies, even when the challenged titles are not present or the allegations are demonstrably false (Cockcroft, 2023). This dissonance between reality and accusation exacerbates the psychological toll on staff, who must respond to unfounded yet fervent opposition, often without institutional or community support.

In addition to verbal and psychological harassment, libraries themselves have increasingly become targets of violent threats. In 2023, all Chicago Public Library branches and several others across Illinois were forced to close temporarily after receiving bomb threats and an active shooter alert directed to the Chicago Police Department’s online chat service. Though ultimately deemed non-credible, the threats required significant emergency response resources—including bomb technicians and canine units—to secure and clear more than 81 locations (Hernandez et al., 2023). This coordinated disruption occurred shortly after the Illinois Secretary of State publicly testified in support of intellectual freedom and against book bans at a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing. Law enforcement attributed the threats to individuals opposing the continued availability of uncensored content in public libraries, emphasizing the ideological motivation behind the incident.

A similar threat occurred in 2024, when multiple libraries in Pennsylvania received bomb threats after announcing drag storytime events, an initiative frequently targeted by anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and misinformation. One event was ultimately cancelled amid safety concerns, exemplifying how ideological aggression can silence marginalized voices and curtail public programming through intimidation tactics (Madani, 2024).

These cases underscore a disturbing normalization of threats and violence against library institutions and staff. They also highlight the growing disconnect between the democratic ideals of intellectual freedom and the current climate of sociopolitical polarization. For many library workers, the escalating tension transforms once safe and affirming workplaces into spaces of

fear and vigilance—resulting in burnout, emotional fatigue, and a profound erosion of morale and professional purpose.

Mental Health Outcomes, Negative and Positive

The experience of ideological aggression within the professional environment of libraries has been shown to exert substantial psychological and emotional pressure on library workers. This pressure stems not only from direct material challenges but also from the anticipation of such incidents, creating a climate of hypervigilance and chronic stress. Across the literature, the most cited mental health outcomes include anxiety, fatigue, burnout, loss of professional satisfaction, changes in workplace behavior, and, in some cases, loss of employment.

These outcomes often intersect in ways that compound and reinforce one another. For example, anxiety related to job security or public confrontation may lead to exhaustion, which in turn may contribute to a decreased sense of professional fulfillment. Even when depression was not explicitly cited in the literature, symptoms of anticipatory stress, fear, and prolonged anxiety were prevalent. This is a clinically significant observation, as individuals with generalized anxiety are approximately seven times more likely to develop depression compared to those without anxiety disorders (Schmidt et al., 2014).

Other related symptoms, such as sleep disturbances, were mentioned less frequently in the reviewed works; however, sleep dysfunction is a well-documented comorbidity of both anxiety and depression. Empirical studies suggest that individuals with sleep loss are over nine times more likely to experience clinically significant anxiety and seventeen times more likely to develop major depression (Jansson-Fröjmark & Lindblom, 2008; Taylor et al., 2005). Given their established bidirectional relationships, the presence of even mild sleep-related symptoms on overall mental health should not be dismissed.

In addition to clinical conditions, the literature identifies behavioral and occupational consequences such as workplace self-censorship—an adaptive behavior borne out of ideological fear and professional vulnerability. This includes avoiding the acquisition of potentially controversial materials, canceling or refraining from proposing public programs, and altering selection practices to preempt external scrutiny. These behaviors, while protective in the short term, are often internally experienced as morally injurious, especially for professionals whose values are rooted in intellectual freedom and inclusivity. One Florida librarian, quoted

anonymously in survey data, captured the internal conflict brought on by self-censorship and community hostility:

“...after a while I just couldn't deal with it anymore, and I don't like that I don't; I'm kind of ashamed to admit that, but after a while I was, like, I just I can't have this on there right now, because I just cannot deal with one more person coming in here and telling me about how we're pedophiles and groomers and all that stuff. Like, I just can't do it. It's crazy. I try. It's just. It's hard.” (Woodward, 2024)

This kind of emotional exhaustion demonstrates how sustained ideological harassment can produce moral distress and psychological fatigue, compelling staff to choose between professional principles and personal well-being. Another librarian reflected on this difficult balancing act:

“I am trying to walk a fine line when doing collection development. If I get too many LGBTQ books I could be yelled at and lose my job, but I also don't want to underserve those looking for these materials. It is important to me that I support this community. If I lose my job, I can't do that ... While I have not stopped ordering LGBTQ books, I have limited how many I purchase. There was one book that came out recently that was an award winner that I skipped because it was LGBTQ and I felt I couldn't add another LGBTQ title to my orders at the moment. Later, a teen came in with the book raving about how good it was. I felt so bad that I had failed to order it and they had to spend their own money purchasing it at the bookstore because of my failure. Self-censorship is a real, detrimental thing. But again, my fear of being told I have too many and losing my job and not being able to help these teens at all is also real.” (Pitts, 2024)

This reflection highlights how the anticipation of job loss, even in the absence of a formal challenge, can produce significant internal conflict and guilt. This kind of precarity is deeply linked to adverse mental health outcomes. Research has demonstrated that the stress of potential unemployment can be as harmful as unemployment itself, contributing to long-term anxiety and depressive symptoms (Paul & Moser, 2009). Chronic workplace stress also alters

brain function, increasing the stress hormone cortisol, impairing memory and emotional regulation, and heightening threat perception (Yeon & Dudak, 2024).

In extreme cases, the effects are not only psychological but also physiological. Several reports indicate that library workers developed stress-related physical symptoms that required medical intervention, including new prescriptions for anxiety and hypertension, or even hospitalization due to stress-induced vertigo (Cockcroft, 2023; Hinds, 2023; Jones, 2024; Leland, 2024; Oltmann, 2023; Pitts, 2024; Witteveen, 2023). These outcomes demonstrate the tangible cost of ideological aggression, extending beyond moral and professional injury into concrete health deterioration.

However, amidst this environment of intimidation and strain, literature also presents evidence of resilience and positive motivation. Some library workers described being galvanized by the controversy, experiencing renewed determination to serve marginalized communities and defend inclusive collections. Notably, some respondents expressed a sense of pride or rebellion in acquiring banned materials, viewing the growing list of contested titles as recommendations rather than warnings (Cockcroft, 2023; Suzuki et al., 2023).

CHAPTER VI – LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This systematized review is subject to several limitations, primarily related to the complex and evolving nature of terminology surrounding sensitive and politically charged topics. The language used to describe issues of identity, censorship, and ideological conflict is not only fluid but often influenced by contemporary sociopolitical climates, including legislation, institutional policies, community standards, and personal values. As such, key terms may vary across time and context, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of search results and the inclusivity of the dataset. Future reviews in this area may require expanded or adapted terminology frameworks to more accurately reflect emerging discourse and ensure the inclusion of relevant materials. Future projects with fewer time constraints would do well to seek out standardized concept coding as much as would be possible within this environment of shifting terminologies and associations. Additionally, structured critical appraisal of each categorized resource would add value to such a review.

Furthermore, sociopolitical pressures exist at multiple levels of influence—ranging from the individual employee and their immediate workplace to larger institutional, governmental, and community structures. These forces shape not only the professional experiences of library staff but also their willingness and ability to participate in research activities. Even within anonymous survey-based studies, the presence of real or perceived risk—such as fear of retaliation, reputational damage, or job insecurity—may create a chilling effect that leads to incomplete data or inhibited candor among respondents.

Future research should aim to expand the empirical foundation surrounding the mental and emotional health impacts of ideological aggression on library staff. Larger and more representative sample sizes are essential, including participants across the full spectrum of library roles—not solely credentialed librarians. Paraprofessional staff, support personnel, and other non-credentialed employees are often on the front lines of public interaction and may experience ideological hostility in unique or amplified ways. The inclusion of these voices is critical to developing a more complete understanding of workplace impacts across the profession.

In addition, future studies should seek to disaggregate sources of occupational stress, distinguishing between those related to general overwork, pandemic-related pressures, and ideological conflict. While the literature offers extensive documentation on workplace stress, emotional labor, compassion fatigue, and burnout in library settings, much of this work either predates or marginally addresses the rise of politically and ideologically motivated challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic also generated a substantial body of research concerning library worker well-being; however, the interplay between pandemic stressors and the ideological tensions of recent years remains underexplored.

Importantly, future research should interrogate the cumulative and intersecting nature of these stressors, recognizing that library employees rarely face one challenge in isolation.

Understanding how different types of stress interact may reveal compounded effects on mental health, workplace satisfaction, and retention within the profession. Focused inquiry into the experiences of library workers from marginalized or minority-identifying backgrounds is strongly recommended. Given that many ideological challenges disproportionately target content related to race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation, employees who share these identities may face heightened levels of personal and professional harm. Investigating the differential impacts of ideological aggression based on identity will be vital to developing responsive, inclusive policies and support systems that reflect the reality of working in today's libraries.

CHAPTER VII – CONCLUSION

The findings of this systematized scoping review highlight a significant and growing threat to the mental and emotional well-being of library workers in the United States: the intensifying ideological aggression directed toward library materials, programming, and personnel. While libraries have long served as vital institutions of democracy, equity, and intellectual freedom, their central values have become focal points of sociopolitical conflict—particularly surrounding LGBTQ+ representation and racial equity. As ideological challenges escalate in both frequency and intensity, so too do their consequences for library staff, manifesting in anxiety, burnout, moral injury, self-censorship, and, in some cases, physical health deterioration.

The review underscores that the emotional toll of ideological conflict is not merely a function of external hostility but is deeply exacerbated by internal professional dynamics—including vocational awe, moral commitment to equity, and institutional expectations of neutrality or silence. These psychological and cultural frameworks, while often sources of pride and motivation, can render library staff especially vulnerable in a climate that demands resilience in the face of harassment, job insecurity, and legislative overreach.

In this evolving landscape, the health of library workers is inseparable from the health of the democratic values they uphold. As the profession confronts unprecedented ideological scrutiny, it must also confront the human cost of maintaining intellectual freedom in hostile environments. Ensuring the well-being of library staff will require not only academic attention, but institutional courage, community solidarity, and a renewed commitment to the values that make libraries indispensable in the first place.

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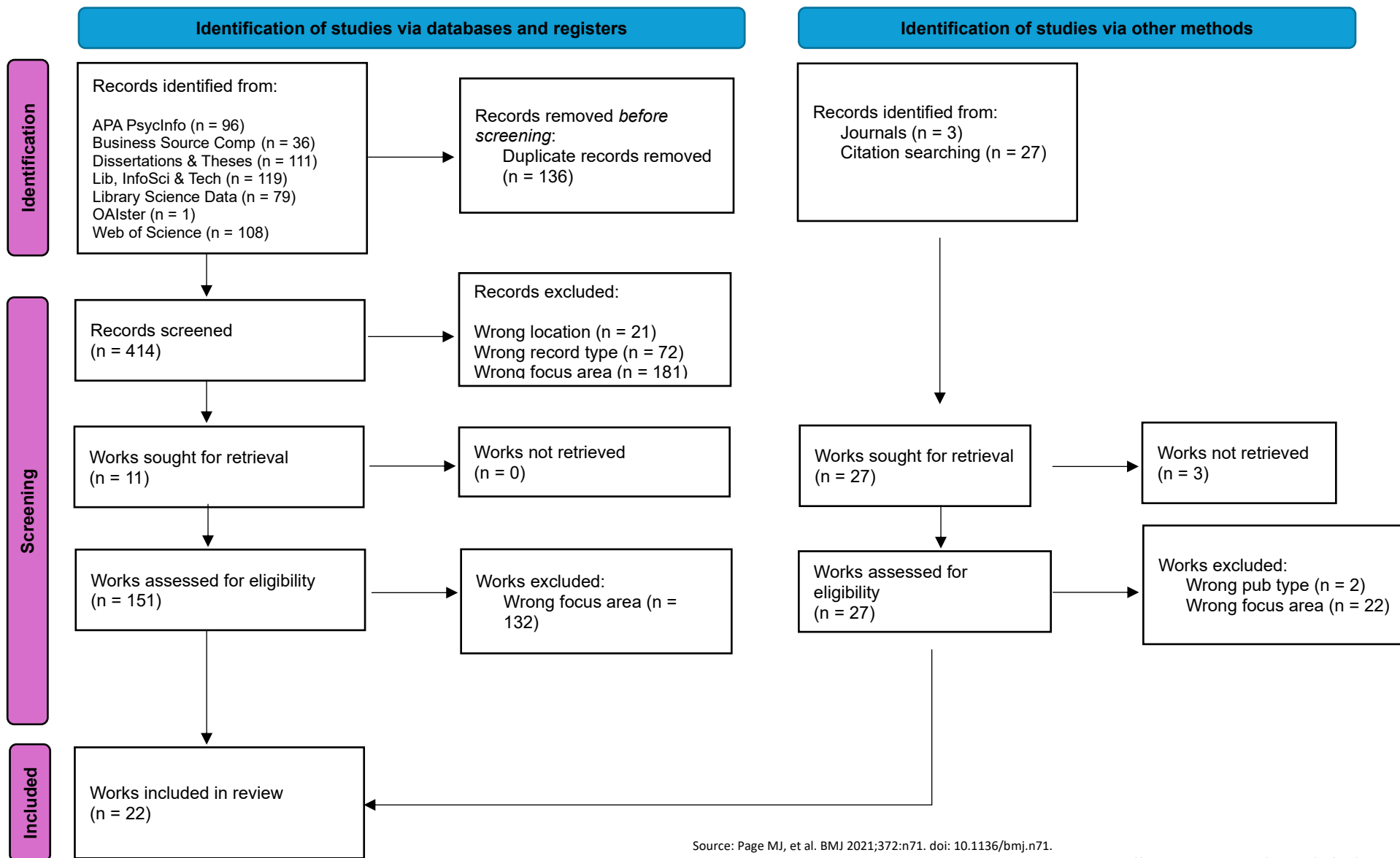
Appendix A
Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses
extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) Checklist

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a scoping review.	i
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary that includes (as applicable): background, objectives, eligibility criteria, sources of evidence, charting methods, results, and conclusions that relate to the review questions and objectives.	i
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known. Explain why the review questions/objectives lend themselves to a scoping review approach.	2
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of the questions and objectives being addressed with reference to their key elements (e.g., population or participants, concepts, and context) or other relevant key elements used to conceptualize the review questions and/or objectives.	2
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate whether a review protocol exists; state if and where it can be accessed (e.g., a Web address); and if available, provide registration information, including the registration number.	3
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify characteristics of the sources of evidence used as eligibility criteria (e.g., years considered, language, and publication status), and provide a rationale.	3
Information sources*	7	Describe all information sources in the search (e.g., databases with dates of coverage and contact with authors to identify additional sources), as well as the date the most recent search was executed.	4, 5
Search	8	Present the full electronic search strategy for at least 1 database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	4, Table C1
Selection of sources of evidence†	9	State the process for selecting sources of evidence (i.e., screening and eligibility) included in the scoping review.	6
Data charting process‡	10	Describe the methods of charting data from the included sources of evidence (e.g., calibrated forms or forms that have been tested by the team before their use, and whether data charting was done independently or in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	6, 7
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought and any assumptions and simplifications made.	6, 7

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
Critical appraisal of individual sources of evidence§	12	If done, provide a rationale for conducting a critical appraisal of included sources of evidence; describe the methods used and how this information was used in any data synthesis (if appropriate).	7
Synthesis of results	13	Describe the methods of handling and summarizing the data that were charted.	6
RESULTS			
Selection of sources of evidence	14	Give numbers of sources of evidence screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally using a flow diagram.	7, Appendix B
Characteristics of sources of evidence	15	For each source of evidence, present characteristics for which data were charted and provide the citations.	7, 8, Table C2
Critical appraisal within sources of evidence	16	If done, present data on critical appraisal of included sources of evidence (see item 12).	7
Results of individual sources of evidence	17	For each included source of evidence, present the relevant data that were charted that relate to the review questions and objectives.	8, 9
Synthesis of results	18	Summarize and/or present the charting results as they relate to the review questions and objectives.	10
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	19	Summarize the main results (including an overview of concepts, themes, and types of evidence available), link to the review questions and objectives, and consider the relevance to key groups.	11-25
Limitations	20	Discuss the limitations of the scoping review process.	26-27
Conclusions	21	Provide a general interpretation of the results with respect to the review questions and objectives, as well as potential implications and/or next steps.	28
FUNDING			
Funding	22	Describe sources of funding for the included sources of evidence, as well as sources of funding for the scoping review. Describe the role of the funders of the scoping review.	n/a

From: Tricco AC, Lillie E, Zarin W, O'Brien KK, Colquhoun H, Levac D, et al. PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA ScR): Checklist and Explanation. *Ann Intern Med.* 2018;169:467–473. [doi: 10.7326/M18-0850](https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-0850).

Appendix B PRISMA Flow Diagram



Source: Page MJ, et al. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.

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Appendix C – Tables

Table C1 | Search Queries

Database	Query	Limiters Applied	Total Results
APA PsycInfo	AB ((librar* AND (staff* OR work* OR job OR employ* OR personnel))) AND AB ((psych* OR mental* OR emotion* OR depress* OR anxiet* OR burnout OR stress* OR morale)) AND ((challeng* OR ban* OR protest* OR aggressi* OR attack OR conservative OR liberal OR republican* OR democrat* OR politic* OR drag OR censor* OR "intellectual freedom" OR "religious freedom" OR "first amendment" OR "free speech" OR "freedom of speech"))	Abstract Search; 2020-2024	96
Business Source Complete	AB ((librar* AND (staff* OR work* OR job OR employ* OR personnel))) AND AB ((psych* OR mental* OR emotion* OR depress* OR anxiet* OR burnout OR stress* OR morale)) AND AB ((challeng* OR ban* OR protest* OR aggressi* OR attack OR conservative OR liberal OR republican* OR democrat* OR politic* OR drag OR censor* OR "intellectual freedom" OR "religious freedom" OR "first amendment" OR "free speech" OR "freedom of speech"))	Abstract Search; 2020-2024	36
Dissertations & Theses A&I	abstract((librar* AND (staff* OR work* OR job OR employ* OR personnel))) AND abstract((psych* OR mental* OR emotion* OR depress* OR anxiet* OR burnout OR stress* OR morale)) AND abstract((challeng* OR ban* OR protest* OR aggressi* OR attack OR conservative OR liberal OR republican* OR democrat* OR politic* OR drag OR censor* OR "intellectual freedom" OR "religious freedom" OR "first amendment" OR "free speech" OR "freedom of speech"))	Abstract Search; 2020-2024	111
Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts	AB ((librar* AND (staff* OR work* OR job OR employ* OR personnel))) AND AB ((psych* OR mental* OR emotion* OR depress* OR anxiet* OR burnout OR stress* OR morale)) AND AB ((challeng* OR ban* OR protest* OR aggressi* OR attack OR conservative OR liberal OR republican* OR democrat* OR politic* OR drag OR censor* OR "intellectual freedom" OR "religious freedom" OR "freedom of religion" OR "first amendment" OR "free speech" OR "freedom of speech"))	Abstract Search; 2020-2024	119

Appendix C – Tables

Table C1 | Search Queries (continued)

Database	Query	Limiters Applied	Total Results
Library Science Database	abstract((librar* AND (staff* OR work* OR job OR employ* OR personnel))) AND abstract((psych* OR mental* OR emotion* OR depress* OR anxiet* OR burnout OR stress* OR morale)) AND abstract((challeng* OR ban* OR protest* OR aggressi* OR attack OR conservative OR liberal OR republican* OR democrat* OR politic* OR drag OR censor* OR "intellectual freedom" OR "religious freedom" OR "freedom of religion" OR "first amendment" OR "free speech" OR "freedom of speech"))	Abstract Search; 2020-2024	79
OAIster	kw:(library workers OR library staff) AND kw:("mental health" OR "emotional health" OR stress) AND kw:(politics OR political)	Keyword Search (in absence of Abstract Search function); 2020-2024	1
Web of Science	AB=(librar* AND (staff* OR work* OR job OR employ* OR personnel)) AND AB=(psych* OR mental* OR emotion* OR depress* OR anxiet* OR burnout OR stress* OR morale) AND AB=(challeng* OR ban* OR protest* OR aggressi* OR attack OR conservative OR liberal OR republican* OR democrat* OR politic* OR drag OR censor* OR "intellectual freedom" OR "religious freedom" OR "first amendment" OR "free speech" OR "freedom of speech")	Abstract Search; 2020-2024; USA or United States; Research Areas - Psychology, Behavioral Sciences, Information Science, Library Science, Occupational Health, Psychiatry, Education, Communication, Cultural Studies, Urban Studies, Social Issues, Social Sciences, Public Administration, Social Work, Sociology	108

Appendix C – Tables

Table C2 | Characteristics of Reviewed Literature

Author(s)	Year	Publication Type	Library Type(s)	Content Challenged	Target of Challenge(s)	Challenge Interaction(s)	Outcomes of Challenge(s)
Albanese	2024	Trade (conference bulletin)	Public	Race/Ethnicity Stereotypes LGBTQ+ Other (police brutality; slavery)	Book/Collection Board/Legislative Body	Punitive Legislation/Policy Unspecified	Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion
Cockcroft	2023	Trade (survey report)	School	Sexual/Reproductive Offensive language LGBTQ+ Stereotypes	Book/Collection Employees	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person) Stalking/Doxxing Punitive Legislation/Policy Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors Anxiety Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Motivation/Inspiration
Crowley	2023	Academic (original article)	Public School	Race/Ethnicity Sexual/Reproductive Offensive language LGBTQ+	Book/Collection Program/Event	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Punitive Legislation/Policy Unspecified	Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Loss of employment Loss of funding

Appendix C – Tables

Table C2 | Characteristics of Reviewed Literature (continued)

Author(s)	Year	Publication Type	Library Type(s)	Content Challenged	Target of Challenge(s)	Challenge Interaction(s)	Outcomes of Challenge(s)
Czarnecki	2023	Trade (editorial)	Public	Sexual/Reproductive LGBTQ+	Book/Collection	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors
Dudak & Yeon	2024	Conference Proceeding (poster session)	Public School	LGBTQ+ Race/Ethnicity	Book/Collection	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Unspecified	Anxiety Loss of funding Unspecified
Fredericks	2024	Trade (editorial)	Public	Unspecified	Employees Unspecified	Punitive Legislation/Policy Unspecified	Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion
Hazelton-Boyle & Hazelton-Boyle	2023	Academic (comment paper)	Public School	Race/Ethnicity Stereotypes Sexual/Reproductive Gender LGBTQ+ Other (history)	Book/Collection Employees Board/Legislative Body	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person) Stalking/Doxxing Punitive Legislation/Policy Judicial action	Changes in workplace behaviors Loss of employment Loss of funding

Appendix C – Tables

Table C2 | Characteristics of Reviewed Literature (continued)

Author(s)	Year	Publication Type	Library Type(s)	Content Challenged	Target of Challenge(s)	Challenge Interaction(s)	Outcomes of Challenge(s)
Hinds	2023	Trade (editorial)	School	LGBTQ+ Unspecified	Book/Collection Employees	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person) Stalking/Doxxing Judicial action	Anxiety Depression Loss of sleep Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion Physical symptoms of stress (panic attacks, heart palpitations) Loss of employment
Jennings-Roche	2023	Academic (original article)	Public School	Race/Ethnicity LGBTQ+ Other (history) Unspecified	Book/Collection Employees	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Punitive Legislation/Policy Judicial action Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors
Kitzie, Floegel, Barriage, & Oltmann	2022	Academic (original article, survey study)	Public	Sexual/Reproductive Gender LGBTQ+	Program/Event	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person)	Changes in workplace behaviors Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion Other (community engagement; local Pride events, counterprotests)

Appendix C – Tables

Table C2 | Characteristics of Reviewed Literature (continued)

Author(s)	Year	Publication Type	Library Type(s)	Content Challenged	Target of Challenge(s)	Challenge Interaction(s)	Outcomes of Challenge(s)
Kohlburn	2023	Academic (original article, survey study)	Public	Race/Ethnicity LGBTQ+ Unspecified	Book/Collection Display/Exhibit Employees	Direct challenges (in-person) Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors Anxiety Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion Physical symptoms of stress Loss of employment Motivation/Inspiration
Morehart	2022	Trade (editorial)	Public	Race/Ethnicity Gender LGBTQ+	Book/Collection Employees Board/Legislative Body	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person) Punitive Legislation/Policy	Changes in workplace behaviors Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion Loss of employment
Padrón	2024	Academic (original article)	Public	Race/Ethnicity Gender LGBTQ+	Book/Collection Program/Event Employees	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Other (accusations to police, “distributing pornography to minors”) Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors

Appendix C – Tables

Table C2 | Characteristics of Reviewed Literature (continued)

Author(s)	Year	Publication Type	Library Type(s)	Content Challenged	Target of Challenge(s)	Challenge Interaction(s)	Outcomes of Challenge(s)
Phillips	2024	Academic (editorial)	Public School	Unspecified	Book/Collection Employees	Unspecified	Other (mental health effects)
Phillips, Pitts, Riedmueller, & Warren	2024	Academic (conference report, panel discussion)	Academic	Unspecified	Book/Collection	Punitive Legislation/Policy Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors
Pitts	2024	Dissertation (qualitative study)	Public	Race/Ethnicity Sexual/Reproductive Gender LGBTQ+	Book/Collection Program/Event Display/Exhibit Employees	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person) Punitive Legislation/Policy	Changes in workplace behaviors Anxiety Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion Physical symptoms of stress (anxiety attacks) Loss of employment Loss of funding

Appendix C – Tables

Table C2 | Characteristics of Reviewed Literature (continued)

Author(s)	Year	Publication Type	Library Type(s)	Content Challenged	Target of Challenge(s)	Challenge Interaction(s)	Outcomes of Challenge(s)
Schattle	2023	Dissertation (qualitative study)	School	Race/Ethnicity LGBTQ+	Book/Collection Employees	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Punitive Legislation/Policy Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors Anxiety Depression Physical symptoms of stress (blood pressure medication) Loss of employment Loss of funding
Suzuki, Diuguid, & Ward	2023	Trade (original article, survey study)	Public Academic	Race/Ethnicity Sexual/Reproductive Gender LGBTQ+ Offensive language Violence Other (witchcraft, anti-police)	Book/Collection Employees	Punitive Legislation/Policy Judicial action Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Loss of funding Motivation/Inspiration
Ward	2023	Trade (editorial)	Unspecified	Unspecified	Book/Collection	Punitive Legislation/Policy Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors

Appendix C – Tables

Table C2 | Characteristics of Reviewed Literature (continued)

Author(s)	Year	Publication Type	Library Type(s)	Content Challenged	Target of Challenge(s)	Challenge Interaction(s)	Outcomes of Challenge(s)
Witteveen	2023	Trade (original article)	Public	Race/Ethnicity Sexual/Reproductive LGBTQ+	Book/Collection Program/Event Display/Exhibit Employees Board/Legislative Body	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person) Stalking/Doxxing	Changes in workplace behaviors Anxiety Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion Loss of employment
Woodward	2024	Dissertation (mixed methods study)	Public	Race/Ethnicity Sexual/Reproductive Gender LGBTQ+	Book/Collection Display/Exhibit	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person) Stalking/Doxxing Punitive Legislation/Policy Unspecified	Changes in workplace behaviors Anxiety Depression Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion Loss of employment
Yeon & Dudak	2024	Academic (original article)	Public	Race/Ethnicity Sexual/Reproductive Gender LGBTQ+	Book/Collection Employees	Remote challenges (social media, website, phone) Direct challenges (in-person) Stalking/Doxxing Punitive Legislation/Policy	Changes in workplace behaviors Anxiety Burnout/Loss of professional satisfaction Fatigue/Exhaustion Loss of employment Loss of funding

Appendix C – Tables

Table C3 | Survey Study Characteristics

Author	Study Methodology	Populations	Sample Size
Cockcroft	Mixed methods survey; Unweighted random sampling	PreK-12 school libraries; Collection decision-makers	729 school staff
Kitzie, Floegel, Barriage, & Oltmann	Qualitative survey, semistructured interviews; recruitment from previous surveys, snowball, purposive sampling	Public libraries, with or without drag event experience	26 public library staff; 11 drag performers
Kohlburn	Qualitative survey, semistructured interviews; recruitment from previous advocacy or leadership positions, purposive sampling	Missouri public libraries	5 public librarians
Pitts	Qualitative survey; convenience sampling	Alabama public libraries	156 public library staff
Schattle	Qualitative survey; homogenous sampling	PreK-12 school libraries; Southeast Texas	11 school librarians
Suzuki, Diuguid, & Ward	Qualitative survey; purposive and convenience sampling	Librarians; Midwest and northeast regions	3 public librarians; 3 academic librarians; 3 school librarians
Woodward	Mixed methods, MBI measurement instrument and qualitative semi-structured interviews; stratified purposive sampling	Public and school librarians; South Florida	52 survey responses (17 school, 35 public) 15 interviews (3 school, 12 public)

Appendix D – Figures

Figure D1 | Reported Attempts to Censor Books in the United States, 2015-2024

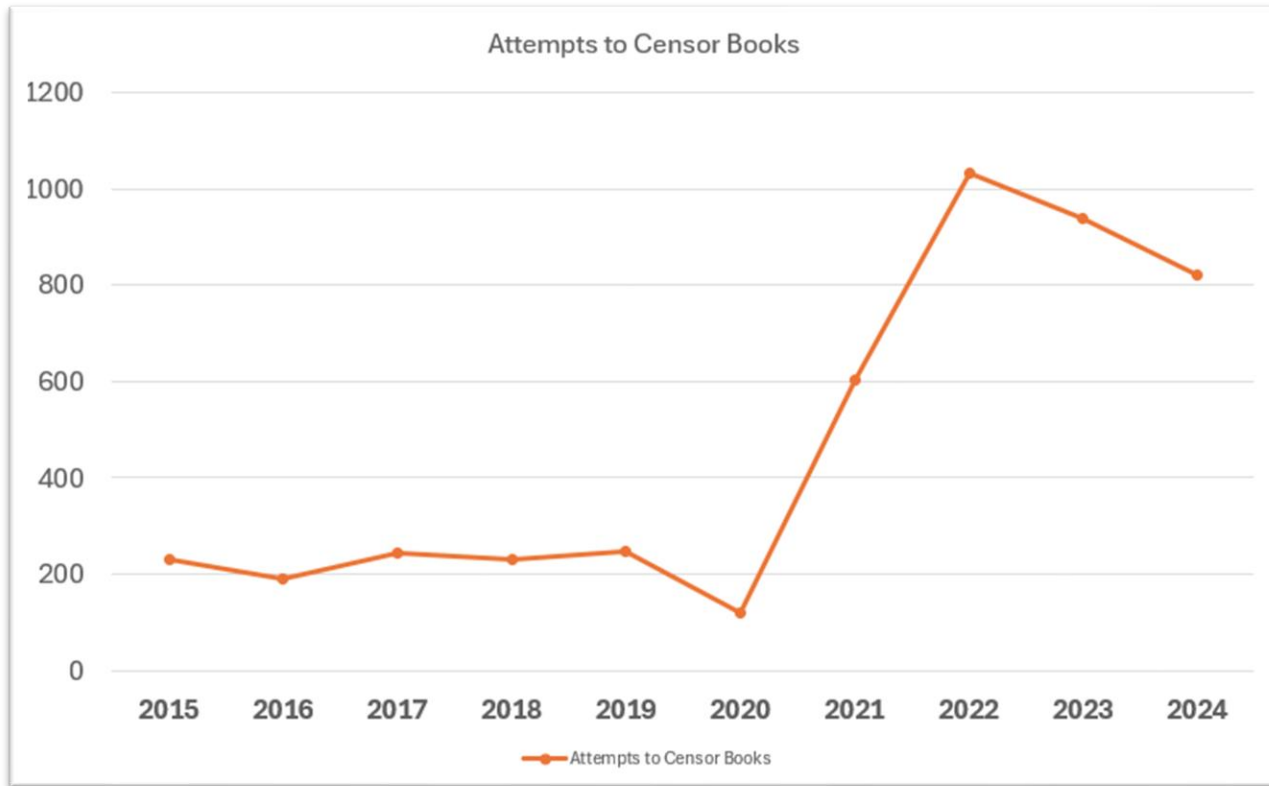


Figure D2 | Search String for APA PsycInfo

Search string, APA PsycInfo

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AB ( (librar* AND (staff* OR work* OR job OR employ* OR personnel)) ) AND AB ( (psych* OR mental* OR emotion* OR depress* OR anxiet* OR burnout OR stress* OR morale) ) AND (challeng* OR ban* OR protest* OR aggressi* OR attack OR conservative OR liberal OR republican* OR democrat* OR politic* OR drag OR censor* OR "intellectual freedom" OR "religious freedom" OR "first amendment" OR "free speech" OR "freedom of speech" )
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Appendix D – Figures

Figure D3 | Publication Year

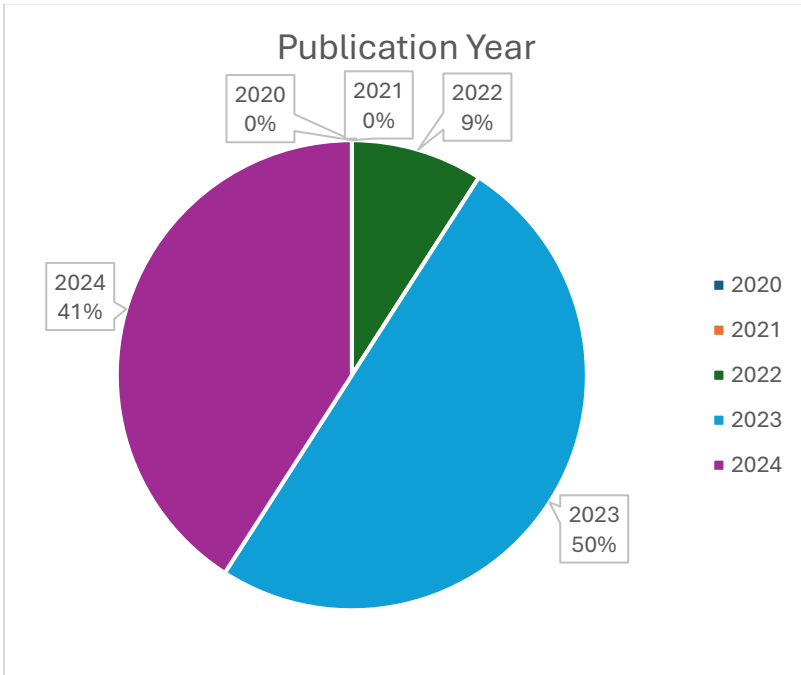
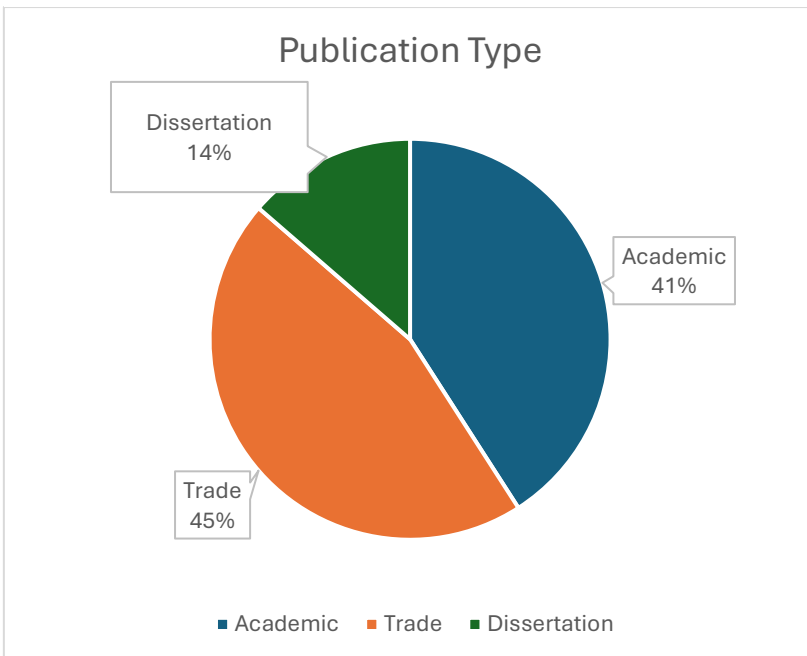


Figure D4 | Publication Type



Appendix D – Figures

Figure D5 | Prevalence of Challenge Topics, Word Cloud

