

Part of the Job: Patron-Perpetrated Sexual Harassment in UK Public Libraries

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Abstract

Patron-perpetrated sexual harassment (PPSH) towards librarians is an under-researched but indicatively critical area of sexual harassment studies and library studies. Preliminary research indicates that PPSH results from numerous overlapping social structures. These social structures include but are not limited to patriarchy and rape culture, white supremacy, feminised labour and service work. This dissertation is the first study on PPSH towards librarians in the United Kingdom (UK) and focuses on public librarians. 143 UK public librarians were surveyed about their experiences of PPSH over the past five years. The results of this survey indicate that PPSH is 'part of the job' for UK public librarians. Respondents had experienced 14 of the 16 sexual harassment behaviours listed in the survey, and 81.8% of respondents had experienced at least one form of PPSH. This study also presents findings concerning the relationship between respondents' age, ethnicity and gender, and their experiences of PPSH. The findings of this study are limited due to the formative scope of the study and the small sample size for specific respondent demographics. Nevertheless, this study has produced significant findings and has brought the burgeoning study of sexual harassment in libraries into the UK and public library contexts. In addition, this study provides recommendations for the profession and future researchers.

Declaration

I have read and understood the College and Departmental statements and guidelines concerning plagiarism. I declare that:

- This submission is entirely my own original work
- Wherever published, unpublished, printed, electronic or other information sources have been used as a contribution or component of this work, these are explicitly, clearly, and individually acknowledged by appropriate use of quotation marks, citations, references, and statements in the text. It is 14,177 words in length.

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List of Abbreviations

ALA – American Library Association

CILIP – Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

EDI – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

LIS – Library and Information Studies

PPSH – Patron-Perpetrated Sexual Harassment

SEQ – Sexual Experiences Questionnaire

UC – University of California

UCSF – University of California San Francisco

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

US – United States

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1. Introduction

In 1992, librarian and author Will Manley published the first survey of sexual harassment in libraries (Manley, 1992). A regular contributor to the *Wilson Library Bulletin*, in the aforementioned year Manley wrote a ‘silly and unscientific’ survey on the sex lives of librarians (Manley, January 1993). Whilst the majority of the questions were crude and comedic, one question asked, ‘have you ever been sexually harassed by a library patron?’ (Manley, January 1993). 1,816 women, or 78.0% of the survey’s female respondents, answered yes (Manley, March 1993; Manley, July/August 1993).¹ Unintentionally, Manley had unearthed a severe and indicatively endemic issue within public libraries: the sexual harassment of librarians by library patrons.

Manley was fired by the *Wilson Library Bulletin* after the ‘sex lives of librarians’ survey was published (Manley, July/August 1993).² Despite this, Manley was moved by the responses to his initial survey and turned to another professional magazine, *American Libraries*, to explore the subject further. In 1993 *American Libraries* (the official magazine of the American Library Association) published Manley’s informal anonymous survey of sexual harassment by library patrons towards librarians (Manley, January 1993).

Manley’s survey was brief, consisting of only three questions, but received 3,758 responses from librarians across the United States (US) (Manley, September 1993). The results were similarly striking as the initial 1992 survey. 73.0% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment from a library patron in the last 12 months, with 40.0% stating it was a monthly occurrence (Manley, July/August 1993). 47 respondents provided anecdotes, unprompted,

¹ It is unclear from Manley’s work what percentage of male respondents answered yes to the question of sexual harassment.

² It is unclear why the *Wilson Library Bulletin* only found issue with the survey post-publication.

detailing their experiences of sexual harassment. These anecdotes were published in *American Libraries* over several months and are distressing to read (Manley, July/August 1993; Manley, September 1993; Manley, October 1993). Whilst the anecdotes touched on different consequences of experiencing sexual harassment, one perspective dominated the conversation. Sexual harassment from patrons is, for many librarians, simply part of the job.

One would expect Manley's numerous articles to have sparked a movement within the library sector to address the problem of sexual harassment. However, this did not occur. Despite the wealth of evidence provided by Manley, sexual harassment within libraries is a severely under-researched subject, both within academia and the wider profession. Furthermore, any relevant works have exclusively focused on North American contexts. As such, this dissertation is the first study to investigate not only patron-perpetrated sexual harassment (PPSH) within United Kingdom (UK) public libraries, but any form of sexual harassment within any type of UK library.

The formative nature of this dissertation necessitates a focus on establishing the fundamental facts of PPSH in UK public libraries. This includes the proportion of public librarians who have experienced PPSH over the past five years, and the types of harassment experienced. In addition, this study employs an intersectional perspective to understand how age, gender, and ethnicity impact sexual harassment experiences. By surveying a sample of UK public librarians, this study will contribute to establishing the scope and scale of PPSH in the UK. Hopefully, this study will lay the groundwork for future UK-based studies and contribute to the growing global conversation around this subject.

1.1 Defining Sexual Harassment

Many studies have found that ‘sexual harassment can be difficult to define’ (Benjes-Small et al., 2021, p.623). The murky waters of sexual harassment can make it challenging to achieve a consensus, particularly when the harassment involves neither physical contact nor verbal interaction (Benjes-Small et al., 2021). In contrast, sexual assault and rape are often easier to define, largely due to their physical and often violent nature. A common practice in sexual harassment studies is utilising several definitions of sexual harassment (Buchanan and Ormerod, 2002; Willness, Steel and Lee, 2007; Oliphant, Allard, and Lieu, 2020; Benjes Small et al., 2021). This dissertation will follow this path to establish a preliminary understanding of sexual harassment in UK public libraries.

One of the UK’s most important legal definitions of sexual harassment comes from the Equality Act 2010. According to this Act, one person sexually harasses another when they engage ‘in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ which has the purpose or effect of violating the victim’s dignity or ‘creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment’ for the victim (Equality Act 2010). This definition focuses not on specific examples of harassment but on the intent and consequences of that behaviour. Definitions of rape and sexual assault in the UK are not covered in the Equality Act 2010 but can be found in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

It is important to note that the Equality Act 2010 does not cover every context for sexual harassment, as the focus is on discrimination rather than assault. For example, the Act protects employees from discrimination by employers but does not necessarily protect employees from harassment by customers (Equality Act 2010; Citizens Advice, 2019). However, employers do have a legal responsibility to protect employees from sexual harassment (Equality Act 2010;

Citizens Advice, 2019). It is also important to note that the Equality Act 2010 does not protect volunteers from workplace sexual harassment, only paid employees (Citizens Advice 2019). This does not excuse sexual harassment in either of these contexts but shows the limitations of legislation.

A second significant definition comes from the United Nations (UN), whose 2018 report on sexual harassment presented the following definition. Sexual harassment is:

...a human rights violation of gender-based discrimination, regardless of sex, in a context of unequal power relations such as a workplace and/or gender hierarchy. It can take the form of various acts including rape, other aggressive touching, forced viewing of pornography, taking and circulation of sexual photographs, as well as verbal sexual conduct (UN Women, 2018, p.8).

In addition, the report remarked that ‘men, women and children can all be victims of sexual harassment’, and that ‘...sexual harassment is neither trivial nor is it exceptional: its ubiquitous presence can take many forms from looks and words to physical assault and rape’. (UN Women, 2018, p.5)

The UN’s definitions illustrate a broader understanding of sexual harassment than the Equality Act does. This difference is due to the purpose of each definition; the UK legislation focuses on the workplace and criminal proceedings. In contrast, the UN focuses on sexual harassment as a global societal epidemic, occurring in many different contexts and environments. Using these two definitions provides a comprehensive theoretical grounding for this dissertation. For convenience, this dissertation will follow the UN’s lead and use the term ‘sexual harassment’ to cover sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape.

2. Literature Review

The academic literature concerning sexual harassment towards librarians is limited, in a multitude of ways. The literature is limited in terms of quantity, time period, geographic focus, and sector focus, which consequentially limits the scope and scale of findings and discussion available. These critiques are not to discredit the existing academic literature. Rather, highlighting the limited nature of these works only serves to emphasise their importance; scarcity creates value. However, this scarcity necessitates a consultation of literature outside of academia, namely online blogs and professional magazines. By casting a wide net, this literature review reveals the well-established facts of sexual harassment, and what is yet to be discovered and discussed about sexual harassment within libraries.

2.1 Cosby, Trump, and #MeToo

Since the mid-2010s three key events have shone a spotlight on the prevalence and harm of sexual harassment and have brought the subject onto the global stage in an unprecedented manner. The three events were the Bill Cosby sexual assault cases, the successful election campaign of Donald Trump, and the culminating #MeToo movement. Although these events were American-centric, they were experienced globally, largely due to the entrenched celebrity status of Cosby, Trump, and many #MeToo victims and perpetrators. With each new accusation, prosecution, and protest, the subject of sexual harassment was solidified as a global zeitgeist from 2014 up to the present day.

The cumulative effect of this cultural wave was that the topic of sexual harassment was addressed in a wide range of contexts and environments. Although discussions originally centred on the worlds of acting and politics, they quickly spread into other areas, such as

education, armed forces, and libraries. The following literature review covers the existing literature around sexual harassment within libraries from three key perspectives: professional bodies, librarians themselves, and academic researchers.

2.2 Silence in the Library

Despite the international dominance of #MeToo, and the coinciding outcries around Cosby and Trump, professional librarianship bodies remained largely silent on the issue of sexual harassment. As of this dissertation's submission, the American Libraries Association (ALA) is the first and only professional body to address the occurrence of sexual harassment within libraries. In 2018 the ALA published an official statement on the #MeToo movement (Eisenstein, 2018). In it, the ALA focused on how libraries can facilitate discussions of the #MeToo movement for local communities (Eisenstein, 2018). However, this brief statement did not acknowledge that librarians experience sexual harassment whilst at work. Ironically, in showing support for the #MeToo movement, the ALA failed to recognise that librarians across America could very easily say 'me too'.

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), the ALA's equivalent in the UK, has never formally commented on sexual harassment in libraries. This absence is particularly surprising considering CILIP's substantial work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues (CILIP, no date a). People of colour and LGBTQ+ people are not only particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, but often experience sexual harassment in combination with racist, homophobic, or transphobic harassment (Buchanan and Ormerod, 2008; Stotzer, 2009; Mott and Cockayne, 2021). Sexual harassment clearly falls within the remit of EDI issues, but for unclear reasons CILIP has yet to acknowledge the existence of this issue for librarians.

The failure of professional bodies, such as CILIP and the ALA, to acknowledge sexual harassment is not only surprising, but deeply concerning. The first recorded discussion of sexual harassment in libraries occurred almost 30 years ago, with Manley's 1993 articles, in the ALA's very own magazine. However, no professional library bodies have directly commented on this indicatively widespread problem. Additionally, these organisations have not provided any support resources for workplaces or librarians, such as skeleton sexual harassment policies or support resources for victims. The silence from professional bodies is a barrier to greater library-centric discussions of sexual harassment. This does not mean, however, that we should discount the library-centric discussions that have already occurred.

2.3 Chain of Whispers

In response to the silence of professional organisations, librarians took it upon themselves to acknowledge the #MeToo movement and share their experiences of sexual harassment at work. The first librarians to do so were Amanda Civitello and Katie McLain, two employees of the Waukegan Public Library Illinois (Civitello and McLain, 2016). Their presentation, entitled *It's Not Just Part of the Job*, was given at the ALA's 2016 Annual Conference; the occurrence of this event further compounds the confusion over the ALA's silence. Influenced by the #MeToo movement, Civitello and McLain's presentation marks the start of a substantive discussion of sexual harassment within librarianship, eventually permeating the academic world (Civitello and McLain, 2016).

It's Not Just Part of the Job centred around Civitello and McLain's informal survey of 173 American librarians regarding their experiences of sexual harassment whilst at work (Civitello and McLain, 2016). The conference materials provided by Civitello and McLain do not include

a copy of the survey, nor their precise methodology. As such, this information must be gleaned from their survey results.

The survey primarily dealt with public librarians, who comprised 92.6% of respondents (Civitello and McLain, 2016). Other respondents were categorised as either academic librarians or special/other librarians (Civitello and McLain, 2016). Respondents were asked about their own experiences of harassment, as well as harassment experienced by colleagues or subordinates. Respondents were not asked about the types of sexual harassment they had experienced but were asked about how they felt their management had handled incidents of harassment.

Overall, Civitello and McLain found that 63.0% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment from members of the public (Civitello and McLain, 2016). 67.8% of respondents knew that their co-workers had experienced sexual harassment, with 27.0% answering 'maybe' and only 5.2% answering no (Civitello and McLain, 2016). Civitello and McLain's finding of 63.0% is very similar to Manley's survey 23 years prior. Evidently, the problem of sexual harassment within libraries has persisted.

The conference format of Civitello and McLain's presentation strongly shaped their content, with a focus on practical advice rather than theoretical discussions. The presentation included numerous examples of sexual harassment behaviours and suggestions of best practices for addressing sexual harassment (Civitello and McLain, 2016). Even Civitello and McLain's section on defining sexual harassment, in which they provide three different definitions, has a practical rather than theoretical focus (Civitello and McLain, 2016). These three definitions came from Merriam-Webster, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the

UN (Civitello and McLain, 2016). As stated, the survey did not ask respondents about the types of harassment they experienced. Therefore, the definitions were provided to expand respondents' understanding of what counts as sexual harassment, rather than establish a theoretical and methodological basis for the survey.

From 2017 onwards, the subject of sexual harassment was increasingly discussed by library profession magazines and websites (Jensen, 2017; Dixon, 2018; MacBride, 2018; Oltmann, 2018; Dewitt, 2019; Kannegiser and Hunter, 2021). Like Civitello and McLain, many of these articles' authors explicitly cited the dramatic global growth of the #MeToo movement as the primary motivating factor (Jensen, 2017; Dixon, 2018; MacBride, 2018; Oltmann, 2018). These articles are significant in that they demonstrate an increasingly open discussion of sexual harassment in libraries, finally recognising on an international platform that this issue is widespread, overlooked, and has severe repercussions. However, the scale of this discussion should not be overstated. The total number of these articles is less than twenty. As such, the professional discussion of sexual harassment in libraries is unfortunately still in its infancy.

A major consequence of this small number of articles is that there is little discussion or debate between the articles and authors. Rather, these articles are in isolated agreeance. Every article presents the same argument; sexual harassment is pervasive within libraries, can be extreme in nature and consequence, and may not be successfully handled by management. However, possibly due to the overlapping publication dates, these articles rarely refer to each other. Even Civitello and McLain's conference presentation, whose unprecedented findings were reported on twice in *American Libraries*, failed to gain traction further afield (Carlton, 2017; Civitello and McLain, 2017; Ford, 2017). Instead of citing other works, these librarian-authored articles

focus on anecdotal experiences of sexual harassment, as well as providing well-established recommendations on how to manage sexual harassment in the workplace.

In 2017, author and former librarian Kelly Jensen published one such article, entitled ‘The State of Sexual Harassment in the Library’ (Jensen, 2017). Jensen’s article follows a similar pattern to the one just explained but has one strong point of difference. Jensen conducted her own informal qualitative survey of sexual harassment experiences in any type of library. Conducted using Google Survey, the survey was only open for one week, but received a substantial 250 responses (Jensen, 2017).

Unlike Civitello and McLain, Jensen did not attempt to collect any statistics about the scale of sexual harassment in libraries. Instead, Jensen collected information about specific experiences of sexual harassment, with a focus on workplace management (Jensen, 2017). Respondents were asked to describe the harassment they experienced, whether they reported the incident, the outcome of the report, and their perspectives on sexual harassment training and sexual harassment as an issue overall (Jensen, 2017).

Jensen only published a small selection of the answers she received, but this edited collection was highly effective in demonstrating her key findings. Firstly, there is widespread confusion about what activities qualify as sexual harassment (Jensen, 2017). Secondly, the majority of librarians coped with their experiences of sexual harassment by adopting a ‘it’s just part of the job’ mentality (Jensen, 2017). This mindset allowed victims to ignore the incident and focus on their work. However, this did not prevent the negative physical and mental consequences of experiencing sexual harassment.

The ‘part of the job’ comments published by Jensen touch on the idea of emotional labour; it is part of the librarian’s job to provide service with a smile, even when experiencing harassment from patrons (Hochschild, 2012; Good and Cooper, 2016; Jensen, 2017; Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020). Respondents who felt that harassment should not be ‘part of the job’ stated that it often became so due to poor managerial handling of sexual harassment incidents (Jensen, 2017). Respondents commonly cited a lack of managerial support and a lack of follow through action when sexual harassment incidents were reported, creating workplace cultures that accepted sexual harassment from patrons as the norm (Jensen, 2017). Consequently, many respondents stated that they no longer reported incidents of sexual harassment (Jensen, 2017).

Jensen published a follow-up article in 2019, with the intention of re-assessing how sexual harassment in libraries had changed since 2017 (Jensen, 2019). Using social media, Jensen conducted a similar survey, but this time gathered responses exclusively from public libraries (Jensen, 2019). Once again, the answers were purely qualitative, so no statistics on sexual harassment in American public libraries were collected or created.

Jensen found that sexual harassment had been discussed in many public libraries, in casual and formal settings, often prompted by the #MeToo movement (Jensen, 2019). Sexual harassment training was offered in some workplaces, but frequently focused solely on harassment between patrons, rather than from patrons towards staff (Jensen, 2019). In other workplaces no training was offered, and management simply restated the library’s existing policies (Jensen, 2019). Overall, Jensen’s second survey found that sexual harassment in public libraries varied widely, both in experience and consequences. Whilst anecdotal experiences are invaluable for illustrating the full story of sexual harassment, they are not enough to establish the scope and scale of the issue.

In 2021 the discussion of sexual harassment in libraries returned to the ALA annual conference. Samantha Kannegiser and Julie Hunter, two academic librarians, presented their findings on sexual harassment within library chat reference services (American Libraries Association, 2021). Kannegiser and Hunter's work is only accessible to conference attendees, however, the brief synopsis of their work states that 60.0% of study participants experienced some form of sexual harassment (American Libraries Association, 2021). Without further details it is unclear how many or what type of respondents Kannegiser and Hunter surveyed, the exact survey tool used, or how they defined sexual harassment. Although Kannegiser and Hunter's work indicates a sustained interest amongst librarians in sexual harassment, the limited information available makes it difficult to fully appreciate their work. Nevertheless, their survey-focused presentation reflected a change in the library world; a recognised need for systematic, formal, quantitative studies on sexual harassment in libraries.

2.4 Academia Responds

There are only four academic studies focused on sexual harassment in libraries, published over 2019 to 2021 (Barr-Walker et al., 2019; Barr-Walker et al., 2021; Benjes-Small et al., 2021; Oliphant et al. 2021). Similarly to the preceding discussion, they are geographically limited, with three coming from the US and the other coming from Canada. Each study has been conducted by groups of academics, rather than solo researchers, and two are interdisciplinary groups within the humanities. All three groups have conducted and published at least one survey of sexual harassment in libraries, but one has published additional works on the subject, including a literature review and theoretical discussion.

The first academic study of sexual harassment in libraries was published in 2019 by Jill Barr-Walker, Denise Caramagno, Iesha Nevels, Dylan Romero, and Peggy Tahir (Barr-Walker et al., 2019). The study focuses exclusively on the authors' workplace, the University of California San Francisco (UCSF). The study was initially intended to only be an internal workplace survey. However, Barr-Walker et al. state that the #MeToo movement, Civitello and McLain's presentation, and the absence of any academic literature on this subject were major motivators for publishing the survey (Barr-Walker et al., 2019).

Barr-Walker et al. anonymously surveyed 33 of their fellow librarians at UCSF (Barr-Walker et al., 2019). The survey used was partially created by Barr-Walker et al. and partially taken from the Institutional Betrayal Questionnaire (Barr-Walker et al., 2019). The survey had five parts, covering respondents' experiences of sexual harassment, feedback on UCSF library management, and respondents' demographic information. Barr-Walker et al. found that nearly half (48.0%) of respondents had experienced sexual harassment at work, and the majority of these people (63.0%) were women (Barr-Walker et al., 2019).

Of the nine sexual harassment behaviours listed on the survey, the 33 respondents had experienced all but one of them (Barr-Walker et al., 2019). The most common forms of sexual harassment were verbal and visual, including comments about the librarian's appearance, other inappropriate comments, and repeated staring (Barr-Walker et al., 2019). The most common perpetrators of sexual harassment were identified as being members of the public, UCSF library staff, and affiliate staff who worked in the library building (Barr-Walker et al., 2019).

Barr-Walker et al.'s study is a valuable and insightful first step into the academic study of sexual harassment in libraries, but the findings are limited in their applicability, particularly to

this dissertation. The main value of Barr-Walker's study is that the survey results formalise the key findings of the informal professional literature previously discussed in this review. However, the small sample size of the survey, which is the product of the study's internal focus and design, undermines the ability of these results to be extrapolated to other library contexts.

This limitation was overcome in Barr-Walker's second study on sexual harassment in libraries. In 2021, Barr-Walker collaborated with three different academics to publish a large-scale academic study of sexual harassment in libraries. Once again, the study focused on academic librarians, however this time the participant boundaries were expanded to include librarians from all 10 University of California (UC) campuses (Barr-Walker et al., 2021). Of a possible 1,610 respondents, 579 librarians completed the survey, which was an altered version of the 2019 study survey (Barr-Walker et al., 2021).

Similarly to the 2019 study, Barr-Walker et al.'s 2021 study found that 54.0% of UC librarians 'had experienced and/or observed sexual harassment at work' (Barr-Walker et al., 2021, p.242). Of this number, 63.0% identified as women, 20.0% as men, and 2.0% as another gender (Barr-Walker et al., 2021).³ Additionally, all 13 sexual harassment behaviours listed on the survey had been experienced by respondents (Barr-Walker et al., 2021).

Barr-Walker et al.'s 2021 survey was far more detailed and comprehensive than the 2019 study, and this is reflected in their findings. Men were more likely to observe sexual harassment, whereas women were more likely to experience sexual harassment (Barr-Walker et al., 2021). Respondents indicated a wide variety of reasons why they did not report their

³ The remaining 15.0% of respondents who had experienced or observed sexual harassment did not disclose their gender identity.

experiences or observations, ranging from the harassment not being egregious enough, to fear of retaliation and lack of support resources (Barr-Walker et al., 2021). In the open response section of the survey, respondents were able to share personal anecdotes, as well as recommendations for policy and procedural improvements (Barr-Walker et al., 2021). Overall, Barr-Walker et al.'s 2021 study is a far more substantial and significant work than the 2019 study. However, it is not without its flaws.

In both the 2019 and 2021 study, the authors could not share data on respondent's ethnicity and LGBTQ+ identities. As both articles explain, 'the lack of diversity in our library and the need to maintain anonymity' means that this data can not be published (Barr-Walker et al., 2019, p.462; Barr-Walker et al., 2021, p.240). Consequently, neither article can comment on how intersecting identities affect UC librarians' experiences of sexual harassment. In order to overcome the limitations of Barr-Walker et al.'s 2019 and 2021 studies, it is necessary to consult other academic studies on sexual harassment in libraries.

The next academic survey of sexual harassment in libraries comes from the second group of US based academics. In 2019 Candice Benjes-Small, Jennifer Knievel, Jennifer Resor-Whicker, Alison Wisecup, and Joanna Hunter published their study of sexual harassment in academic libraries (Benjes-Small et al., 2019).⁴ Benjes-Small et al.'s study asked two research questions. The first was 'what is the prevalence of sexual harassment by co-workers among library workers in academic libraries', and the second question replaced 'co-workers' with 'patrons' (Benjes-Small et al., 2021, p.627).

⁴ Benjes-Small et al.'s 2019 study was republished in 2021, albeit rewritten and expanded upon. The arguments proffered in both articles are identical, therefore they will be referred to interchangeably and not discussed separately.

The survey was run for 24 days in April 2018 and received 613 complete responses (Benjes-Small et al., 2019). As Benjes-Small et al.'s study was published in the same year as Barr-Walker et al.'s first study, the former does not acknowledge the latter. Benjes-Small et al. do acknowledge that the literature on this subject is very limited, and therefore focus the majority of their research on sexual harassment studies in other workplace contexts (Benjes-Small et al., 2019).

Benjes-Small et al.'s study operates on several well-established principles from the wider field of sexual harassment studies. These principles include that women are more likely to experience harassment than men, and that 'the severity and type of sexual harassment depend on both the nature of the harassment as well as its frequency and persistence' (Benjes-Small et al., 2019, p.63). Furthermore, 'women in organizations that are tolerant of sexual harassment are more likely to be harassed' than organisations that are not tolerant of harassment (Benjes-Small et al., 2019, p.63). In reviewing this literature, Benjes-Small et al. noted that the vast majority of workplace sexual harassment studies focus on harassment between co-workers, rather than from clients or customers towards staff (Benjes-Small et al., 2019; Benjes-Small et al., 2021). Whilst there are similarities between these two harassment relationships, the imbalance shows that the field of sexual harassment research is far from saturated.

Benjes-Small et al.'s survey utilised the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), a common tool for studying sexual harassment (Benjes-Small et al., 2019). The SEQ will be discussed further in the methodology section of this dissertation. For the time being, it is important to note that the SEQ version used by Benjes-Small et al. defines sexual harassment through a list of thirty behaviours, divided into five categories (Benjes-Small et al., 2021). The unique feature of the SEQ is that it does not use the term 'sexual harassment' until the final question, where

respondents are asked if they have experienced sexual harassment in the given context (Benjes-Small et al., 2019). The purpose of this question is to collect information on the disparity between respondents' and the survey's definitions of sexual harassment, a key issue in the previous informal studies of sexual harassment. Finally, respondents were asked to report only on the last five years of their life, with the authors justifying this limitation by citing the fallibility of long term memory and the precedent set by similar studies (Benjes-Small et al., 2019).

Benjes-Small et al.'s results differ significantly from Barr-Walker et al.'s but align with the informal surveys and articles previously discussed. 77.4% of respondents answered yes to experiencing at least one type of sexual harassment, from either co-workers, patrons, or both (Benjes-Small et al., 2019). However, 83.1% of respondents answered no to the final survey question explicitly asking whether or not they had experienced sexual harassment from a co-worker or patron (Benjes-Small et al., 2019). This statistic shows that there is a major discrepancy between the authors' and SEQ's definition of sexual harassment, and what respondents consider to be sexual harassment. Benjes-Small et al. argue that the major cause for this discrepancy is the 'part of the job' mentality that is predominant in libraries and other female-dominated, service-oriented workplaces, such as nursing and retail (Good and Coper, 2016; Benjes-Small et al., 2019; Green, in press). This mentality creates an attitude that sexual harassment is to be expected in the workplace, and therefore, only major incidents qualify as sexual harassment.

The third and final group of researchers are the most prolific, having published three distinct journal articles since 2020. Based in Canada, this research group is primarily comprised of three Library and Information Science academics (Tami Oliphant, Danielle Allard and Angela

Lieu) rather than an interdisciplinary group of humanities scholars. The first article published by this trio, to be known as the Oliphant group, is a literature review of workplace sexual harassment studies deemed sufficiently relevant to a library workplace context (Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020).

With a focus on third-party sexual harassment, denoting a customer or client perpetrator rather than co-worker, the Oliphant group reviewed 97 case studies from feminised, service-orientated workplaces such as retail, hospitality, and nursing (Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020). The similarities between these workplaces and libraries extended further, and included factors such as customer service expectations, performance of care work, gendered work roles, feminised labour, and job precarity (Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020,). According to the Oliphant group, all of these factors play a role in enabling and normalising sexual harassment, allowing harassment to occur with such frequency that it is believed to simply be ‘part of the job’ (Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020, p.417).

The Oliphant group’s literature review was not just a review, but also presented the first theory for understanding sexual harassment in the specific context of libraries. This theory is represented as a diagram in Figure 1. A complex interweaving of identity and workplace factors, the Oliphant group’s theoretical diagram illustrates the numerous social structures that are at play in any instance of PPSH in a library. The Oliphant group’s theoretical diagram is a significant achievement for this field of study, as it is an important step in understanding not only why sexual harassment occurs in libraries, but why it goes unchallenged and unaddressed.

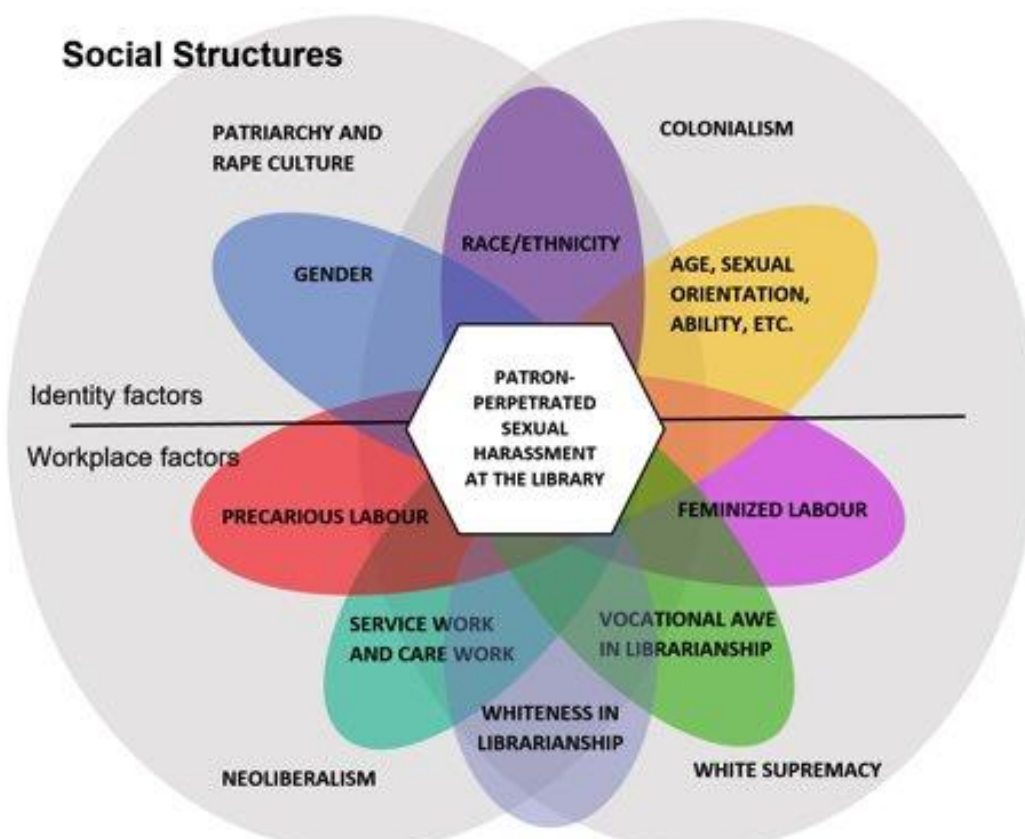


Figure 1. The Oliphant group's theoretical diagram of overlapping social structures that contribute to sexual harassment in libraries. (Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020, p.424).

One minor note regarding the Oliphant group's theoretical diagram is that 'workplace factors' could be more accurately named 'profession factors'. This latter term is more accurate because the five factors it denotes are traits of the librarianship profession, rather than the workplaces in which librarians operate. This renaming would allow 'workplace factors' to denote individual elements that vary according to the specific library workplace, such as the type of library, patron population size, and physical layout. However, this is only a minor issue, especially considering the absence of literature on sexual harassment in libraries. The Oliphant group's theoretical diagram is a robust and valid assessment of the wider contextual factors present during PPSH in the library.

The Oliphant group's second article on sexual harassment in libraries continued this theoretical focus, intended to grow the body of theory for the Library and Information Studies (LIS) academic field (Oliphant, Allard and Lieu, 2020). Published in 2020, this second article presents four propositions 'for intersectional feminist anti-violence education in LIS' (Oliphant, Allard and Lieu, 2020, p.95). The Oliphant group began their article on the well-substantiated premise that PPSH:

'in libraries is an "everyday" form of gender-based violence that has been minimized by and downplayed within the library profession itself as well as within LIS education' (Oliphant, Allard and Lieu, 2020, p.96).

The four subsequent propositions focus on what Library and Information Studies (LIS) education and educators must do to prepare LIS students for sexual harassment experiences and how to prevent sexual harassment within libraries. Although the propositions will not be discussed in detail, they are valuable and important contributions, and are endorsed as part of this study's formal recommendations.

In 2021 the Oliphant group, joined by Karla Mallach, moved from theoretical discussions to a practical study (Oliphant et al., 2021). Their third article takes the form of a presentation at the Canadian Association for Information Science (CAIS) conference. The brief presentation details Oliphant et al.'s survey on PPSH in libraries across Canada and the US. The Oliphant group utilised a modified version of the SEQ, supplemented with additional questions, which resulted in an extensive survey (Allard, 2022a).

The survey received 505 responses, making this study of an equivalent size to Benjes-Small et al.'s (Oliphant et al., 2021). The vast majority of respondents (83.0%) worked in public libraries, with the others working in academic and special libraries (Oliphant et al., 2021).

Unsurprisingly, 91.0% of respondents identified as female, with the remaining 9.0% identifying as either male or gender non-conforming (Oliphant et al., 2021).

The intersectional focus of the Oliphant group's theoretical work is carried over to their practical study, demonstrated through their collection of ethnicity data. 90.0% of survey respondents identified as white, with the remaining 10.0% identifying as either Asian, Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latinx, or Black (Oliphant et al., 2021). Having received a large enough sample to ensure respondent anonymity, the Oliphant group's study should have provided the first opportunity to quantitatively understand how non-white librarians' experiences of sexual harassment differ to those of white librarians.

Unfortunately, the Oliphant group were unable to provide any statistics regarding the rates of sexual harassment for these groups. These results are going to be published in a book in 2023, and therefore cannot be shared before this happens (Allard, 2022b). The absence of this information, whilst understandable, means that there is no data on sexual harassment in libraries according to respondents' gender and ethnicity from any country or any type of library.

Unlike Benjes-Small et al.'s structured survey, the Oliphant group's survey was a simple open text box for respondents to describe incidents of sexual harassment (Oliphant et al., 2021). Unfortunately, it is unclear whether respondents could submit multiple incidents of sexual harassment, or if the limit was one incident per responder. This absence of information is likely to be due to the conference presentation format, which is far briefer than a journal article or book chapter.

The Oliphant group's survey results align with the high rates of sexual harassment within libraries previously discussed in this review. 93.0% respondents reported sexual harassment from a patron in-person, and 80.0% experienced this over the phone or online (Oliphant et al., 2021). Survey answers were codified into several analytical themes, the process of which categorised sexual harassment incidents into four types of sexual harassment (Oliphant et al., 2021). These categories ranged from non-verbal to verbal, and to physical (Oliphant et al., 2021). Unfortunately, the Oliphant group do not ascribe a percentage to each type of harassment, limiting the usefulness of this categorisation. Nevertheless, the Oliphant group's study once again demonstrates that sexual harassment in libraries is an incredibly frequent and serious occurrence.

2.5 Where to Next

Despite the wealth of literature around sexual harassment, gender equality, and feminist theory, this literature review shows that there is a serious dearth of literature on the specific subject of sexual harassment within libraries. Manley's 1993 surveys showed that sexual harassment in libraries was a common and serious issue, but it was not until 2016 that this subject was discussed in any substantial manner. Furthermore, it was not until 2019 that the first academic study on the subject was published, all of which have their limitations. Clearly, there are major absences of knowledge within this subject. This dissertation intends to take the first step in addressing some of these gaps, within a UK context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Epistemology

Following the path of the Oliphant group, this research employs an intersectional feminist epistemology. Intersectional feminism originated in the 1980s with American Black feminist theory but has developed and expanded in the decades since (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013).

Concisely explained:

...it [intersectionality] facilitates a form of feminist enquiry that aims to, and is capable of capturing the complexity and multiplicity of axes of oppression (Lewis, 2009, p.207).

Intersectional feminism goes beyond traditional feminist theory to explore how people's life experiences differ according to the overlaying of multiple identities, such as age, gender, and ethnicity. In terms of sexual harassment studies, intersectional feminist theory asserts that the frequency and way in which individuals experience sexual harassment will differ according to the different identities they hold.

3.2 Research Questions

This study revolves around three research questions, which aim to produce an intersectional understanding of the scale of sexual harassment in UK public libraries over the past five years.

The questions are as follows.

1. What proportion of UK public librarians have experienced PPSH over the last five years?
2. What types of PPSH have UK public librarians experienced over the last five years?
3. How do age, ethnicity, and gender identity affect UK public librarians' experiences of PPSH?

In order to answer these three research questions, this study employs a quantitative methodology. This methodology was chosen due to the lack of prior research on sexual harassment in libraries, particularly in a UK context. A quantitative methodology will help this study establish the scale of PPSH in UK libraries.

3.3 Survey Design

As mentioned in the literature review, one of the most common tools for measuring sexual harassment in the workplace is the SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Gutek, Murphy and Douma, 2004; Henning et al., 2017; Benjes-Small et al., 2021). The SEQ was originally created in 1988, and took the form of a standard survey (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). Respondents were presented with a list of sexual harassment behaviours, and were asked to indicate whether or not they had experienced those behaviours. As mentioned, the SEQ's point of difference was that it did not use the term 'sexual harassment' until the final question. As a result, the SEQ was able to collect data not only on respondents' sexual harassment experiences, but on respondents' perceptions of sexual harassment as well.

Whilst an initially valuable tool, the SEQ has a critical flaw which undermines its suitability for this dissertation. The first flaw comes from the SEQ's long history. As stated, the original SEQ was created in 1988, and since this time variants of the SEQ have proliferated. These variants were typically created to adapt the SEQ for a particular context, such as the military or nursing, or to improve the SEQ's methodology, often by altering the number of sexual harassment behaviours on the survey (Fitzgerald et al., 1999; Gutek, Murphy and Douma, 2004).

Barbara Gutek, Ryan Murphy, and Bambi Douma (2004) provide an overview of the numerous SEQ variants. These include the original SEQ, SEQ2, SEQ-W, SEQ-E, SEQ-R, SHOM, SEQ-L, and SEQ-DoD, to name but a few. Since 2004 further variants have been published, including the personalised versions utilised by the Oliphant group and Benjes-Small et al. (2021) (Allard, 2022b). As Gutek, Murphy and Douma (2004) argue, these numerous variations means that the SEQ is not a standardised tool. Therefore, any version of the SEQ is limited in the validity of its results and the ability to compare results between SEQ studies (Gutek, Murphy and Douma, 2004). This comparability is the main purported strength of the SEQ, but evidently, this strength is actually a severe flaw.

Rather than using the SEQ, this study employs the UK government's survey tool from their 2020 Sexual Harassment Report (United Kingdom. Government Equalities Office, 2020). The intention of the UK government's report is very similar to this study; to ascertain 'the prevalence of sexual harassment' within a chosen population (United Kingdom. Government Equalities Office, 2020, p.7). For the government, this population was a representative sample of the UK population (United Kingdom. Government Equalities Office, 2020). For this study, the chosen population are individuals who have worked in the UK as a public librarian at any point in the last five years, from May 2017 to May 2022.

The UK Government report's approach to defining sexual harassment differs markedly from studies that employ the SEQ. Although the survey utilises the 2010 Equality Act's definition of sexual harassment, there is a strong supplementary focus on:

...the self-determined nature of sexual harassment...allowing participants to determine what they experienced based on their own, self-determined view of the sexual harassment behaviours being unwanted (United Kingdom. Government Equalities Office, 2020, p.7).

The focus on personal perceptions of sexual harassment is reflected in the language used in the survey questions, with the phrase ‘made you feel uncomfortable’ repeatedly appearing (United Kingdom. Government Equalities Office, 2020, p.24).

As a result of the legal and self-determined approach to defining sexual harassment, the survey does not present respondents with a single authoritative definition. Instead, like many of the studies covered in the literature review, the survey defines sexual harassment through a list of fifteen sexual harassment behaviours (United Kingdom. Government Equalities Office, 2020). After several rounds of testing, a sixteenth question was added to the survey, rounding out the survey’s definition of sexual harassment (United Kingdom. Government Equalities Office, 2020). This question asked respondents if they had experienced any other forms of sexual harassment not already covered in the survey. This question solved the issue of balancing a comprehensive list of sexual harassment behaviours with a functional and practical survey that respondents could quickly complete.

Undoubtedly, the UK government survey has neither the longevity nor widespread testing of the SEQ. Nevertheless, the theoretical foundations and resulting design of the UK government survey are far more in line with modern-day understandings of sexual harassment than the SEQ, making the former a more appropriate tool for this study than the latter.

3.4 Survey Structure

This survey utilised a broad definition of ‘public librarian’, primarily based on respondents’ self-identification. Question one of the survey informed respondents that they did not need a librarianship degree to be considered a public librarian. Rather, it only mattered whether or not the respondent had worked in a public library, either as an employee or volunteer.

The survey employed in this study is comprised of 20 questions, with the first four being screening questions.⁵ Question one determined the respondent's eligibility to participate in the survey. If the respondent answered 'no' to question one, the survey would conclude. Questions two, three, and four collected simple demographic data on participants, specifically whether they were under 18 whilst working in a public library, their gender identity, and their ethnicity.

The structure of question three was based on the Stonewall organisation's guide to capturing LGBT data in workplace research (Stonewall, 2016). In order to create a respectful and inclusive environment, Stonewall strongly argues in favour of allowing people to self-describe their gender identity, as well as providing the option to not disclose their gender identity at all (Stonewall, 2016). Consequently, the survey included these two options within the answer list for question three.

Following the first four screening questions, the respondents were asked to answer 16 questions on specific sexual harassment behaviours. Respondents were asked to indicate either 'yes' or 'no' to each question. In line with the quantitative methodology of this study, respondents were not asked to describe any sexual harassment experiences.

3.5 Data Collection

The survey was hosted on the platform Opinio, which complied with data protection regulations. All survey responses were completely anonymous, and respondents were assured of their anonymity before completing the survey. Respondents were also assured that their

⁵ A copy of the survey is available in the appendix.

answers could not be traced back to themselves or their workplaces and were given the option to decline to answer any survey questions.

The survey was open for 34 days, from May 17 2022 until June 19 2022, and was distributed digitally through several avenues. Firstly, it was shared with fellow students on the UCL Library and Information Studies MA course. The survey was distributed on two JISC mail servers, namely LIS-PROFESSION and LIS-PUB-LIS. The former is intended for any library professionals, and the latter is specifically for public librarians. The survey was also shared through professional networks on social media. Additionally, respondents were invited to share the survey with any interested parties. The survey may, therefore, have been shared via additional pathways or platforms unknown to this study's author.

4. Results

Over the course of 34 days, the sexual harassment survey received 207 responses. These responses were exported from Opinio and analysed using SPSS and Excel. Surveys that answered ‘no’ to question one were removed, as they did not qualify for this study. Incomplete surveys, meaning surveys that were abandoned part way through, were removed from the results pool. Survey responses that did not answer every question were still considered complete, as respondents were given the option of refusing to answer any of the survey questions. Following this filtering, the final number of completed survey responses was 143.

4.1 Age, Gender, and Ethnicity

Of the 143 responses, only three had been under 18 years old at any point in the last five years whilst working as a UK public librarian (2.1%).

Gender Identity	Number	Percentage
Female	123	86.0%
Male	16	11.2%
Non-binary	2	1.4%
Prefer to self-describe	2	1.4%
Total	143	100.0%

Table 1. Results for respondents’ gender identity

Question three asked respondents about their gender identity. The results are shown above in Table 1. The overwhelming majority of respondents were women. 123 respondents (86.0%) identified as female, 16 respondents (11.2%) identified as male, two respondents (1.4%) identified as non-binary, and two respondents (1.4%) self-described their gender identity. The

self-descriptions provided in this last category will not be shared to ensure respondent anonymity.

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Asian or Asian British	11	7.7%
Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	2	1.4%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	3	2.1%
Other ethnic group	4	2.8%
Prefer not to say	3	2.1%
White	120	83.9%
Total	143	100.0%

Table 2. Results for respondents' ethnicity

Question four asked respondents about their ethnicity. The results are shown above in Table 2. The vast majority of respondents identified as White, with 120 respondents (83.9%) selecting this category. 11 respondents (7.7%) identified as Asian or Asian British, two respondents (1.4%) identified as Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, and three respondents (2.1%) identified as mixed or multiple ethnic groups. Four respondents (2.8%) identified as another ethnic group not listed above. Three respondents (2.1%) chose not to disclose their ethnicity.

4.2 Incidents of Sexual Harassment

Table 3 (p.42) shows the complete survey results for questions five through 20. The sixteen different sexual harassment behaviours have been displayed in descending order of 'yes' results, rather than the actual survey order. This means that the first behaviour, 'unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual nature about you or others that made you feel uncomfortable', was experienced by the greatest proportion of respondents (64.3%). Conversely, the last

behaviour on the table, 'rape and/or attempted rape', was experienced by the fewest respondents (0.0%).

This ordering reveals four natural groupings for the survey results. These groups are shown in Table 3 (p.42) by the coloured boxes. The red box indicates group one. These are the sexual harassment behaviours that were experienced by the greatest proportion of respondents, between 40.0% and 65.0%. The orange box indicates group two. These are the second most commonly experienced group of behaviours, generally between 20.0% and 30.0%. The blue box indicates group three. These are some of the least commonly experienced sexual harassment behaviours, all falling under 10.0%. The green box is group four. These are the types of sexual harassment that were not experienced by any respondents.

Group one (red) contains four types of sexual harassment. The most common type of sexual harassment experienced by UK public librarians is 'unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual nature about you or others that made you feel uncomfortable', with 64.3% of respondents answering 'yes'. The subsequent three most common forms of sexual harassment are unwelcome staring or looks (59.4%), displays of pornographic or sexually offensive materials (50.3%), and unwelcome comments of a sexual nature about your body or clothes (44.1%).

Group two (orange) contains five types of sexual harassment. Group two behaviours are commonly experienced by public librarians but substantially less frequently than group one. Group two's two most common sexual harassment behaviours received a 'yes' response rate of 28.7%. These are a patron intentionally brushing up against you or invading your personal space in an unwelcome sexual way, and unwanted touching e.g. placing their hand on your lower back or knee.

The additional types of sexual harassment included in group two are as follows. 23.8% of respondents had experienced a patron making persistent and/or unwanted attempts to establish a romantic and/or sexual relationship. 20.3% of respondents had experienced a patron physically following them without their permission in a way that made them feel sexually threatened. 17.5% of respondents had experienced unwelcome catcalls, wolf-whistling or other provocative sounds. Each sexual harassment question in group two was not answered by either one or two respondents.

Group three (blue) contains five sexual harassment behaviours that received substantially lower 'yes' answers than groups one and two. Less than 10.0% of respondents answered 'yes' to any of the group three behaviours. The most common form of sexual harassment within this third group is actually 'any other forms of sexual harassment', which received a 'yes' response rate of 7.7%. Unfortunately, this study's quantitative structure did not allow respondents to comment on what these other types of sexual harassment were. The inability to ascertain this information is an unavoidable limitation for this study. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that these 11 respondents felt that none of the examples of sexual harassment listed in the survey adequately described their experiences of sexual harassment.

Also within group three are the following sexual harassment behaviours. 4.9% of respondents had received unwanted messages with material of a sexual nature. 4.2% of respondents had felt pressured by a patron to date them or do a sexual act in exchange for something. 2.8% of respondents had experienced unwanted, overt sexual touching from a patron, and 2.8% had also been flashed by a patron.

The question regarding flashing was the most commonly unanswered in this survey. Five respondents did not provide an answer. There are several possible reasons why a respondent did not answer a question. For example, the respondent may have felt uncomfortable providing an answer, unsure whether their experiences fit the description, or accidentally skipped over the question. However, the inability to know with certainty why a respondent did not answer the question is a minor and somewhat expected limitation of this study.

Group four (green) contains the two behaviours that received zero 'yes' responses. These are a patron taking/and or sharing sexual pictures or videos of you without your permission, and rape and/or attempted rape.

Survey Question	Did Not Answer		No		Yes	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual nature about you or others that made you feel uncomfortable	0	0.0%	51	35.7%	92	64.3%
Unwelcome staring or looks which made you feel uncomfortable	1	0.7%	57	39.9%	85	59.4%
Displays of pornographic or sexually offensive materials which made you feel uncomfortable, including it being viewed near you	0	0.0%	71	49.7%	72	50.3%
Unwelcome comments of a sexual nature about your body and/or clothes	0	0.0%	80	55.9%	63	44.1%
Someone intentionally brushing up against you or invading your personal space in an unwelcome, sexual way	2	1.4%	100	69.9%	41	28.7%
Unwanted touching (e.g. placing hand on lower back or knee)	1	0.7%	101	70.6%	41	28.7%
Someone making persistent and/or unwanted attempts to establish a romantic and/or sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it	1	0.7%	108	75.5%	34	23.8%
Someone physically following you without your permission in a way that made you feel sexually threatened	1	0.7%	113	79.0%	29	20.3%
Unwelcome catcalls, wolf-whistling or other provocative sounds	2	1.4%	116	81.1%	25	17.5%
Any other forms of sexual harassment	2	1.4%	130	90.9%	11	7.7%
Receiving unwanted messages with material of a sexual nature e.g. by text/messaging app, email, social media, instant chat, or another source	2	1.4%	134	93.7%	7	4.9%
Feeling pressured by someone to date them or do a sexual act in exchange for something	1	0.7%	136	95.1%	6	4.2%
Flashing (e.g. the deliberate exposure of someone's intimate parts)	5	3.5%	134	93.7%	4	2.8%
Unwanted, overt sexual touching (touching of the breasts, buttocks or genitals, attempts to kiss)	1	0.7%	138	96.5%	4	2.8%
Someone taking and/or sharing sexual pictures or videos of you without your permission	1	0.7%	142	99.3%	0	0.0%
Rape and/or attempted rape	2	1.4%	141	98.6%	0	0.0%

Table 3. Results for respondents' experiences of PPSH

Red = Group One Orange = Group Two Blue = Group Three Green = Group Four

5. Discussion

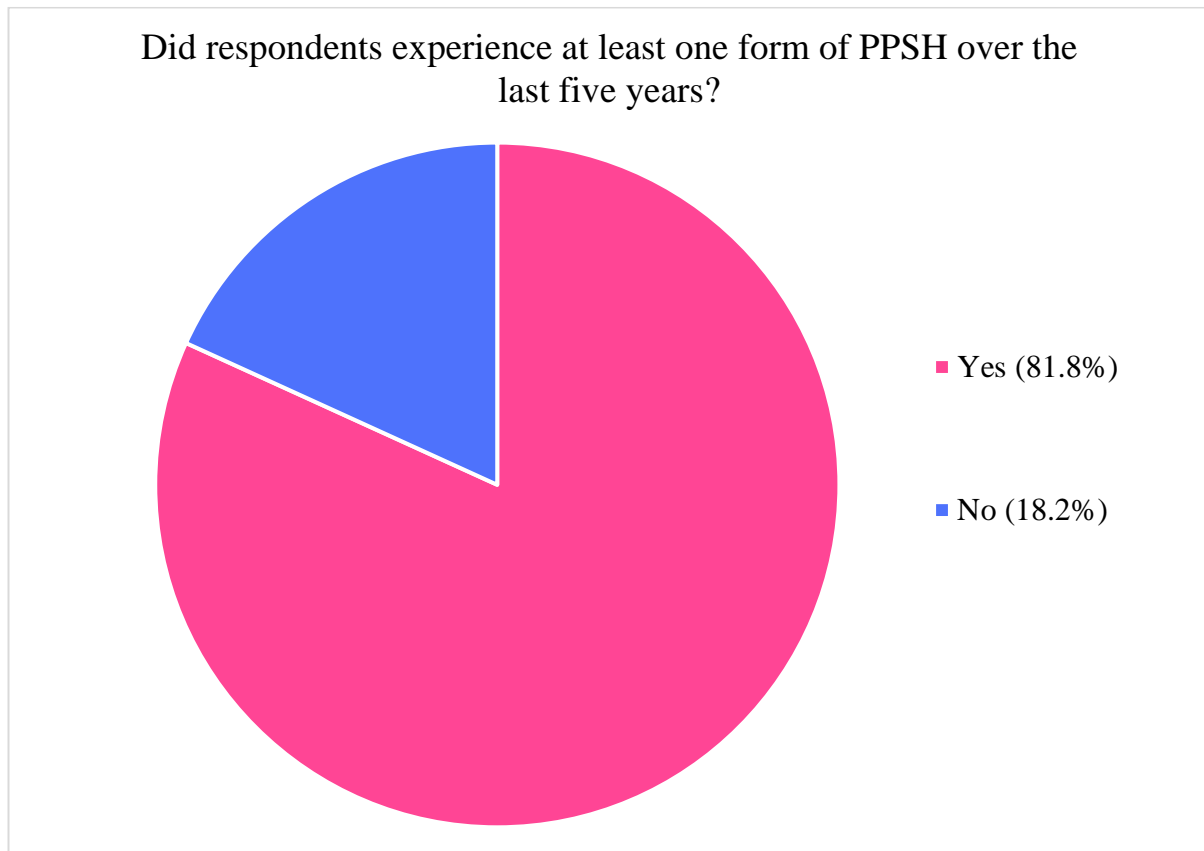


Figure 2. Results for whether respondents experienced at least one form of PPSH

Based on the results of this study, it is evident that PPSH has been widely experienced by UK public librarians over the past five years. Of the 143 respondents, 117 had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment listed in the survey. This means that 81.8% of UK public librarians surveyed in this study have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment from a library patron over the past five years. Figure 2 illustrates this key finding.

The results of this study, particularly the finding of 81.8%, are similar to most of the results of the studies covered in the literature review. Manley's 1993 survey, the earliest recorded survey on this subject, found that 73.0% of respondents had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment (Manley, July/August 1993). The subsequent studies, academic and non-academic,

produced comparable findings, such as Civitello and McLain's (2016) result of 63.0%, and Barr-Walker et al.'s (2019) result of 77.4%. Barr-Walker et al.'s 2021 result of 54.0% is the most disparate to the results of this study but is in agreement in showing that a majority of respondents had experienced sexual harassment. Only two studies found a greater proportion of respondents who had been sexually harassed. These are Benjes-Small et al.'s study, which had a result of 100.0%, and the Oliphant group's study, which had a result of 93.0% (Benjes-Small et al., 2021; Oliphant et al., 2021).

Comparing the results of this study to the ones covered in the literature review is not without its challenges and limitations. None of the previous studies discussed used the same methodology as this study, nor did they focus on the exact same library contexts. Despite their differences, these studies have consistently found that the majority of respondents have experienced sexual harassment. This universal trend gives substantial credence to the notion that sexual harassment towards librarians is a long-standing and widespread issue. The results of this study adds another voice to this chorus.

As this study has utilised the UK Government's 2020 sexual harassment survey, there are substantial grounds for comparing the results of this study to the wider UK workforce. The UK Government's survey findings are dramatically lower than the results of this study. Only 29.0% of the government's survey respondents had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in the last 12 months (United Kingdom. Government Equalities Office, 2020). This result is, obviously, far lower than the 81.8% result found in this study.

The difference between the two results could be explained by the difference in time coverage. The government's study only asked respondents to reflect on the past 12 months, whereas this

study asked respondents to report on the past five years. However, the difference between the two results is so drastic that it is unlikely to be solely the product of this variable. As such, the comparison of these two studies strongly suggests that librarians experience sexual harassment at a far greater rate than the wider UK workforce.

On the subject of time, it is important to acknowledge that the five year period covered in this study includes the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the UK several prolonged and sporadic lockdowns were enforced from March 2020 onwards, with restrictions differing among the devolved governments (Paun et al., 2020). The lockdowns typically required public librarians to work remotely, or to work on-site with significant spatial restrictions (Peachey, 2020; McMenemy, Robinson and Ruthven, 2022). As such, librarians' physical exposure to patrons was notably reduced during the period of pandemic restrictions.

It is therefore likely that a decrease in the occurrence of PPSH also occurred. However, there are no prior UK-based studies to compare results with, thereby making it very difficult to determine how the pandemic and rise of remote working impacted PPSH.

The results of this study not only support the statistical conclusions presented in the literature review, but also support the anecdotal evidence presented in the professional literature. In particular, the result of 81.8% strongly supports the rhetoric that sexual harassment in libraries is simply part of the job (Civitello and McLain, 2016; Carlton, 2017; Civitello and McLain, 2017; Ford, 2017; Jensen, 2017; MacBride, 2018; Dewitt, 2019; Jensen, 2019). Based on the demographic data collected, there is no one gender or ethnicity that is immune to sexual harassment, nor does being underage protect a librarian from sexual harassment. Whether

assisting patrons in person or remotely, librarians are exposed to and have experienced sexual harassment.

Four out of five public librarians surveyed in this study had experienced at least one type of sexual harassment, however, it was rare for a respondent to have only experienced one type of harassment. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they had experienced multiple forms of sexual harassment over the past five years. The structure of the survey meant that respondents were not asked to distinguish separate incidents of sexual harassment, nor were they asked to recount the number of times they had experienced a single type of sexual harassment.

As such, the results from this study do not present a comprehensive picture of PPSH in public libraries. Nevertheless, this study is a valuable contribution to this burgeoning field, helping to formalise anecdotal accounts of harassment, capture the scale of the issue, and create an impetus for addressing sexual harassment in libraries.

This study and its findings do have their limitations. The chosen data collection methods capitalised on professional networks of current public librarians. Whilst this was an effective method, it was unlikely to reach any ex-librarians, including those who quit the profession due to sexual harassment. As such, this study may not have captured the most severe cases of PPSH. In addition, the data collection methods may not have been effective in reaching volunteer or part-time librarians, who are less likely to participate in professional networks.

Additional limitations of this study are the natural limitations of a quantitative methodology. As previously discussed, respondents were not asked to describe their experiences of sexual

harassment, nor were they asked about the impact of those experiences. Although these aspects were beyond the scope of this dissertation, they have been addressed in other works. This includes the works discussed in the literature review, the broader field of sexual harassment studies, and the umbrella field of feminist studies. Nevertheless, exploring the impact of sexual harassment within the specific context for libraries is a potential avenue for future research.

5.1 Types of Sexual Harassment

Table 3 (p.42) shows the survey results for the sixteen different types of sexual harassment, in order of most common to least common. As discussed in the results section, this ranking revealed four distinct groups. These groups are not only useful for understanding the broad trends in sexual harassment experiences for UK public librarians but are also helpful aids for analysing the results of this study's survey.

Group one contains the sexual harassment behaviours experienced by the highest proportion of respondents. These behaviours share several common features, such as involving no direct physical contact between the patron and the librarian. The first and fourth most common types of sexual harassment experienced by respondents are of a very similar nature, pertaining to unwanted sexual jokes and comments. These results are unsurprising.

Each work included in the literature review referred to this type of harassment, illustrating the widespread commonality of this type of sexual harassment in libraries and other workplaces (Civitello and McLain, 2016; Carlton, 2017; Civitello and McLain, 2017; Ford, 2017; Jensen; 2017; Jensen, 2019). Librarians' anecdotes of sexual harassment regularly quoted patrons' inappropriate comments and jokes, and each of the preceding academic studies recorded experiences of verbal sexual harassment (Barr-Walker, et al., 2019; Barr-Walker et al., 2021;

Benjes-Small et al., 2021; Oliphant et al., 2021). The results of this study support the widely held argument that verbal harassment is one of the most common forms of sexual harassment, particularly in libraries.

Unwelcome staring is the second most common form of sexual harassment experienced by respondents. This high result is understandable considering the particular attributes of this behaviour. With no verbal interaction or physical contact required, a patron can stare inappropriately at a librarian from almost any practical distance within a library. The patron does not need to be in close physical proximity to the librarian, nor do they need to identify themselves to the librarian, allowing the cover of anonymity which may embolden certain patrons. Even when inappropriate staring occurs at close quarters, it can be challenging to address; victims may simply want to ignore the behaviour and avoid a verbal altercation (Fitzgerald, Swan and Fischer, 1995).

The third most common behaviour is ‘displays of pornographic or sexually offensive materials’ and is particularly noteworthy. The issue of patrons’ access to pornography via public library resources is regularly discussed outside of the context of sexual harassment. This occurs most frequently in the US, where the debate is grounded in issues of freedom of information and constitutional rights (American Library Association, 2007; Peralta, 2011; Edlund, 2020). In the UK, however, this debate is less prominent.

UK public libraries typically have policies explicitly prohibiting patrons from accessing pornography on the library’s computers (CILIP, no date b; Islington Council, no date; Aberdeen City Libraries, 2016; Libraries NI, 2016; National Library of Wales, 2016). In addition, many libraries use internet filters to block pornographic websites from being accessed

on the library's network (Cooke et al., 2014). Despite these policies and procedures, it is evident from this study that patrons are still accessing and harassing librarians with displays of pornographic material. This is most likely being done on patron's personal devices, possibly using their own mobile data. It is therefore necessary for UK public libraries to re-evaluate current policies and procedures to reduce the occurrence of this form of sexual harassment. Although patrons have a right to information, librarians have the right to a harassment-free workplace.

Despite the harm they cause, the group one behaviours are often not taken seriously as a form of sexual harassment. Inappropriate remarks and unwanted staring can easily be dismissed by perpetrators, witnesses, management, and even victims themselves, either as a misunderstanding or an insignificant issue (Fitzgerald, Swan and Fischer, 1995; Good and Cooper, 2016; Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020). A common line of defence is that the perpetrator was just being friendly, or that the victim is too sensitive (Good and Cooper, 2016; Bergenfeld et al., 2022; Green, in press). In addition, the non-physical and typically non-aggressive nature of these remarks means that people do not recognise these behaviours as being a form of sexual harassment (Wood and Moylan, 2017; Benjes-Small et al., 2021). It is in this regard that comprehensive definitions, such as the ones offered in the introduction of this dissertation, can be of significant value.

Group two contains the second most common types of sexual harassment behaviours, experienced by around 20.0% to 30.0% of respondents. Compared to group one, the group two behaviours are more physical and direct. These include a patron making inappropriate physical contact with the librarian, and a patron following the librarian without permission. These forms of harassment are commonly described in the works covered in the literature review,

particularly the anonymous anecdotes included in blogposts and online articles (Civitello and McLain, 2016; Jensen 2017; McBride, 2018; Jensen, 2019).

The other two behaviours included in group two, whilst not involving any physical contact, are still more direct and escalated than the behaviours in group one. These other two behaviours are a patron making provocative sounds towards a librarian, and a patron persistently attempting to establish a romantic or sexual relationship. Unlike group one, these behaviours are more difficult to excuse as a simple misunderstanding and are therefore more widely recognised as a form of sexual harassment. Nevertheless, the results of this study show that these behaviours have been experienced by a substantial proportion of UK public librarians.

The third group of sexual harassment behaviours are some of the least common forms of harassment experienced by respondents. Group three behaviours were all experienced by less than 10.0% of respondents and are a rather disparate group of behaviours. The highest result within group three belongs to ‘any other forms of sexual harassment’, with just under 8.0% of respondents answering ‘yes’. As previously mentioned, the quantitative methodology of this study means that respondents could not be given the opportunity to provide further details. As such, it is unclear what other types of sexual harassment these respondents experienced.

This methodological limitation occurred, in part, due to the formative nature of this study. As there is minimal prior research in this field, especially in a UK context, this study was never intended to be nor could ever have been an exhaustive investigation. Understanding the other forms of sexual harassment not listed in this study’s survey is therefore the remit of another future study.

Considering the recent Covid pandemic, and the subsequent rise of remote working, it is surprising that just under 5.0% of respondents had received unwanted messages with material of a sexual nature. As discussed, the Covid pandemic and resulting lockdowns meant that many public libraries had to shift their services entirely online. With a dramatic increase in the use of digital communications between librarians and patrons, one would expect that unwanted sexual messages would be widely experienced. This expectation is compounded by Kannegiser and Hunter's survey results, which found that 60.0% of their respondents had experienced sexual harassment whilst providing chat reference services (American Library Association, 2021). The results of this study show, however, that this prediction did not prevail. Unwanted sexual messages from patrons have not been widely received by UK public librarians over the past five years.

The infrequency with which respondents felt pressured to date a patron or perform a sexual act in exchange for something is not surprising. As workplace sexual harassment studies have shown, this form of harassment typically takes place between managers and subordinates, or employers and employees (Gregory, 2004). These are relationships where one person has clear and direct power over the other, with the ability to punish the victim if they do not comply (Gregory, 2004).

Patrons rarely have this form of direct power over a librarian. The literature review material reflects this absence, providing minimal anecdotal evidence of patrons pressuring librarians in this way. However, this should not discredit this form of sexual harassment entirely. As the survey results show, just over 4.0% of respondents have experienced this form of harassment in the past five years. Whilst this number is far lower than most of the harassment behaviours included in this study, any number above zero is unacceptable.

The two least common forms of sexual harassment experienced by respondents, aside from behaviours which no respondents experienced, are flashing and unwanted, overt sexual touching. The similar result for these two behaviours is, once again, not surprising. These behaviours are some of the most physical and most extreme forms of harassment included in the survey. CCTV and a substantial number of potential witnesses (either librarians or patrons) would likely be deterrents to flashers, as would the inability to dismiss the incident as a misunderstanding. Similarly, unwanted, overt sexual touching is difficult to ignore, and requires a close proximity between patron and librarian. Whilst any form of sexual harassment is unacceptable, the low result for these two behaviours is understandable.

The fourth and final group of sexual harassment behaviours are those that no respondents had experienced over the past five years. Group four is comprised of only two types of sexual harassment. The two behaviours that received zero 'yes' responses were a patron taking and/or sharing sexual pictures or videos of a librarian without their permission, and rape and/or attempted rape.

Although none of this study's respondents experienced these forms of sexual harassment, this does not mean that no UK public librarians have had these experiences over the past five years. This is particularly relevant for patrons taking/sharing photos or videos of librarians; a librarian would need to catch the patron or see the evidence in order to know it occurred. Otherwise, the librarian could be entirely oblivious to the occurrence of this behaviour. Rather than stating that group four behaviours have never occurred, this study instead proposes that these two forms of harassment are highly uncommon experiences for UK public librarians. Overall, the

fact that patrons experienced fourteen of the sixteen behaviours presented in the survey demonstrates the prevalence and variety of PPSH that has occurred in UK public libraries.

5.2 Age

This study was unable to collect a substantive sample size for the experiences of underage public librarians. Only three respondents indicated that they had been under 18 years old whilst working as a UK public librarian in the past five years. Despite this small sample size, the experiences of these respondents, and of underage public librarians more broadly, should not go unaddressed.

All three respondents who had been under 18 years old indicated that they had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment from a patron. The survey design means that it is not clear whether these respondents experienced this harassment whilst they were underage, or in the period after they turned 18. Nevertheless, the patrons who harassed these respondents likely would not have known the respondent's exact age. All these patrons would have known is that they were targeting young and vulnerable individuals, who may or may not have been children in the eyes of the law.

In cases of sexual harassment, the age of the victim is significant because it changes the nature of the crime being committed. In the UK there are numerous pieces of legislation addressing the different forms of sexual harassment and sexual assault within the separate legal jurisdictions of the UK (Sexual Offences Act 2003; The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008; Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009; Equality Act 2010). Without delving into the legal minutiae of these numerous pieces of legislation, the most important point is that sexual harassment or assault between adults is a markedly different crime to an adult sexually

harassing or assaulting a child. The consequences of the latter potentially include long-term restrictions around the perpetrator's access and proximity to children, and naturally carries the implication/association of paedophilia. Age is, therefore, an important factor to consider in cases of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The legal consequences for the perpetrator are not the only reason to discuss a victim's age. With less life experience than an adult, teenagers and children typically do not know how to respond to instances of harassment, nor how to handle the negative impact upon their physical, mental, and emotional health (Boles, 2015). Civitello and McLain noted this point in their 2016 conference presentation, outlining several possible indicators that an underage librarian has been sexually harassed. Library managers not only have a legal obligation to ensure the safety of underage librarians but also have an ethical responsibility to ensure the safety of these vulnerable employees and volunteers (Health and Safety Executive, no date; Rubin, 1991).

Upon initial inspection, the small sample size of underage librarians collected by this survey would suggest that underage librarians are a rare occurrence in UK public libraries. However, evidence from various public libraries across the UK shows that this is not necessarily the case. Public libraries regularly advertise volunteer roles specifically aimed at teenagers, often as young as 14 (High Life Highland, no date; North Wales Area Library, 2021; Dorset Council, 2022; Slough Borough Council, 2022). These opportunities occur on a regular basis, such as through the Duke of Edinburgh Award programme or an annual summer volunteer programme (Bexley Libraries, no date; The Reading Agency, 2013; The Reading Agency, 2014; Slough Borough Council, 2022; Surrey County Council, 2022).

Aside from regularly bringing underage volunteers into the library, these programmes focus heavily on patron services, such as leading reading groups (North Wales Area Library, 2021; Dorset Council, 2022; Slough Borough Council, 2022; Surrey County Council, 2022). As such, these underage volunteers work predominantly in the open public areas of the library, rather than the restricted staff only areas. Therefore, these children are regularly physically exposed to all library patrons and are consequently vulnerable to PPSH.

Just like adult librarians, underage librarians have the right to work in a safe environment without fear of sexual harassment. The results of this study support Civitello and McLain's assertion that underage librarians are not only acutely vulnerable to but are experiencing PPSH (Civitello and McLain, 2016). Further academic research is required in this area to fully understand this subject. In the meantime, library management should be aware of the possibility of underage librarians being sexually harassed by patrons. Additionally, management should ensure robust policies and procedures are in place to prevent this from happening and take appropriate steps if it does occur.

5.3 Gender

Of the 123 respondents who identified as female, 104 (84.6%) had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment from a patron in the last five years. Of the 16 respondents who identified as male, nine (56.3%) had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment from a patron in the last five years. Four respondents identified as either non-binary or self-described, and all four had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment from a patron in the last five years. The results for female and male respondents are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4 respectively.

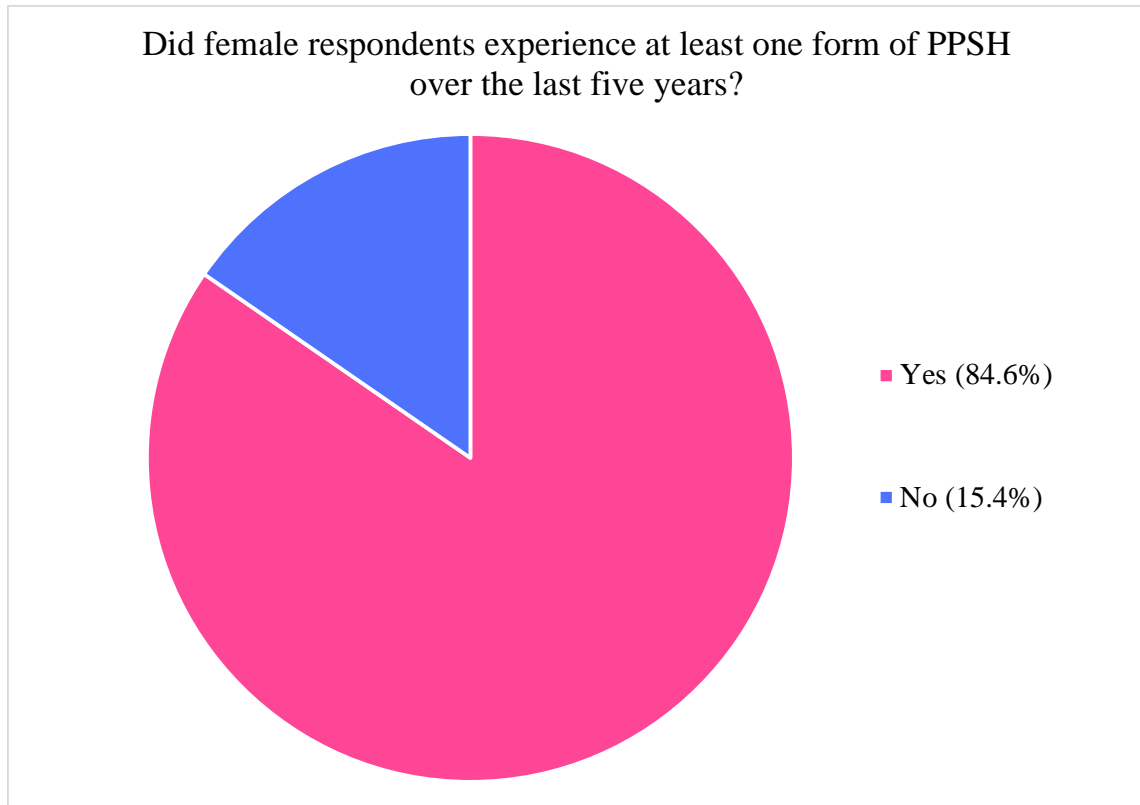


Figure 3. Results for whether female respondents experienced at least one form of PPSH

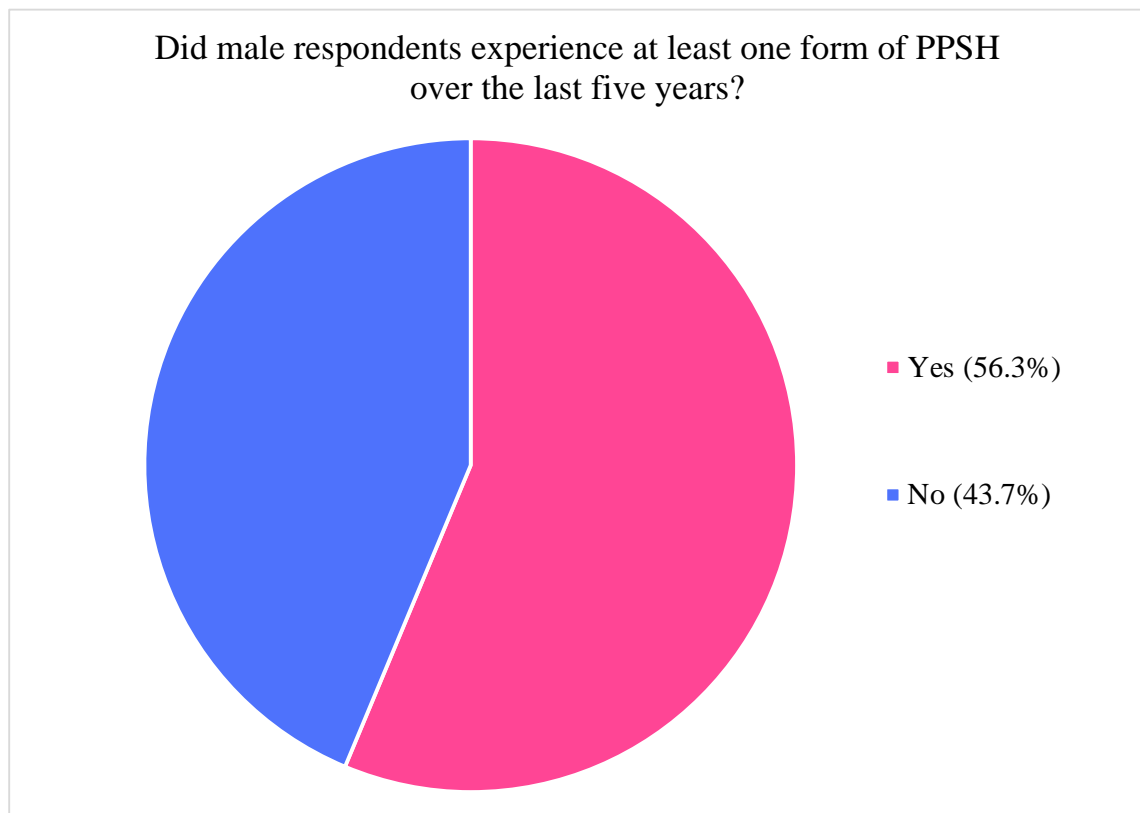


Figure 4. Results for whether male respondents experienced at least one form of PPSH

A chi-square test of independence showed that there was a statistically significant association between gender (male or female) and experience of sexual harassment, $X^2(1, N = 139) = 7.45$, $p = .006$. This test shows that a public librarian's gender identity significantly impacted the probability that they would be sexually harassed by a library patron, with female librarians having a higher probability than male librarians.

This study was able to achieve a sample size with a gender composition that was fairly representative of the UK library workforce. According to CILIP's most recent diversity report, 79.0% of the UK library and information workforce identify as female (CILIP, 2018). This study's proportion of women was slightly higher, sitting at 86.0%. In regards to men, this study had a lower proportion of male respondents compared to the UK librarian population. 11.2% of this study's respondents identified as male, whereas 21.0% of the UK librarian population identifies as male (CILIP, 2018).

Although the male and female sample size is reasonably representative of the UK librarian workforce, it is unclear whether the same can be said for this study's sample of gender diverse librarians. This uncertainty is due to a lack of information; despite the numerous articles around LGBTQ+ librarians and LGBTQ+ professional networks, there is no clear statistic on the number of gender diverse librarians in the UK. Therefore, it cannot be stated with any certainty how representative the data collected in this study is of the wider experiences of gender diverse librarians in the UK.

Unfortunately, this study was unable to collect a large enough sample size for gender diverse respondents to perform any statistical tests. This limitation should not discredit the data that was collected. All four non-binary and self-described respondents had experienced at least one

form of PPSH over the past five years. This high result indicates that non-binary and other gender diverse UK librarians are likely to be experiencing PPSH and may be particularly vulnerable to this form of harassment.

Overall, the results of this study regarding the gender of respondents support the well-established principle that women are more likely to experience sexual harassment and assault than men (Lewis, 2018). This proposition is fundamental to the field of feminist studies, including the work of the Oliphant group (Allard, Lieu and Oliphant 2020; Oliphant, Allard and Lieu, 2020). The Oliphant group's theoretical diagram (Figure 1. p.27) clearly illustrates the importance of gender to PPSH. In the diagram, patriarchy and rape culture are one of the four major social structures that influence PPSH in libraries. The facet of 'feminised labour' also appears in the diagram outside of the boundary of 'patriarchy and rape culture'. Gender dynamics manifest in several different ways in the Oliphant diagram but are consistent in reinforcing the vulnerability of women to sexual harassment.

Whilst their theoretical work is substantial, the Oliphant group's planned timing for their forthcoming publication means they are yet to publish their survey findings in full (Allard, 2022b). Barr-Walker et al. 2019 were also unable to comment on gender in relation to their results, as this would have compromised their respondents' anonymity. Only Barr-Walker et al. 2021 and Benjes-Small et al. 2021 were able to provide any gender insights, and they concluded that women were more likely to experience sexual harassment than men. This dissertation, therefore, supports the findings of these two 2021 studies, and supports the Oliphant group's theoretical work on the significance of gender identity for PPSH.

Although this study's findings are particularly significant for female librarians, the results for male librarians should not be ignored. Over half of male respondents have experienced a form of sexual harassment from a patron over the last five years. The works discussed in the literature review rarely addressed male librarians' sexual harassment experiences. This is likely due to the female-focus discussed above, as well as the dominance of women within the librarianship profession. However, the results of this study show that PPSH is a common experience for male public librarians. As such, it should be addressed in research and in the workplace alongside the harassment of female and gender diverse librarians.

5.4 Ethnicity

The following discussion regarding ethnicity has divided respondents into two main categories. These categories are white people, and people of colour. The latter category combines respondents who identified as either Asian or Asian British, Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, mixed or multiple ethnic groups, or another ethnic group. This decision was made partially for practical reasons. The formative nature and limited scale of this study means that it is neither effective nor viable to investigate each ethnicity individually. However, there is also a theoretical basis for this analytical angle.

The decision to divide respondents into these two categories is based upon intersectional feminist theory, and in particular, the recognition of white supremacy within librarianship. As the Oliphant group's theoretical diagram (Figure 1. p.27) shows, white supremacy is one of the main contextual influences on PPSH in libraries (Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020; Oliphant, Allard and Lieu, 2020). It affects not only the concepts of feminised labour and universal access, bringing forth the image of the white saviour and Lady Bountiful, but also the expected

identities of librarians themselves (Schlesselman-Tarango, 2016; Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020; Oliphant, Allard and Lieu, 2020).

Ethnic diversity and racism have been long-standing issues within librarianship, which has led to the dominance of white librarians, particularly in the UK. According to CILIP's most recent diversity report, 97.0% of UK librarians identified as white, and only 3.0% identified as people of colour (CILIP, 2018). In contrast, 88.0% of the UK population identifies as white (Poole, 2019). Evidently, UK librarianship is dominated by white individuals, meaning that where librarians of colour do work, they are visible minorities, are often heightened targets of harassment, and may have less power to combat harassment (Adib and Gurrier, 2003). In addition, the presence of white supremacy within library management procedures means that librarians of colour may not receive sufficient support when harassment does occur (Allard, Lieu and Oliphant, 2020).

Ethnicity complicates experiences of sexual harassment. When a person of colour experiences sexual harassment, it is not unusual for racial harassment to occur simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1989; Buchanan and Ormerod, 2002; Woods, Buchanan and Settles, 2009). Considering these practical and theoretical factors, it is worthwhile to investigate the sexual harassment experiences of librarians of colour separately from the experiences of white librarians.

Three respondents chose not to disclose their ethnicity, and all three had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in the last five years. Naturally, these three respondents cannot be included in this analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and sexual harassment.

Of the 120 respondents who identified as white, 99 (82.5%) had experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in the last five years. Of the twenty respondents who identified as a person of colour, fifteen (75.0%) had experienced at least one type of sexual harassment in the last five years. The proportion of librarians of colour who had experienced at least one form of PPSH was, therefore, just slightly lower than the proportion of white librarians, with a difference of 7.5%. The results for white respondents and respondents of colour are shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6 respectively.

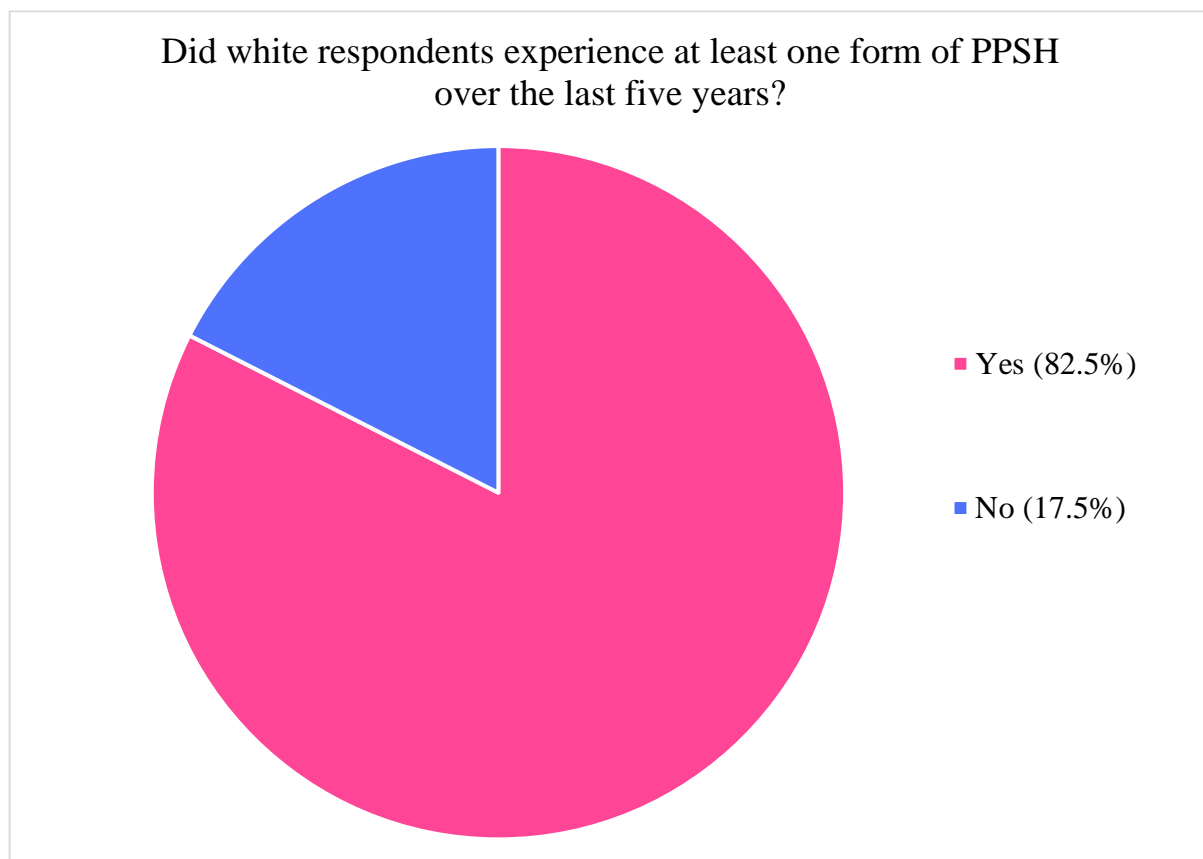


Figure 5. Results for whether white respondents experienced at least one form of PPSH

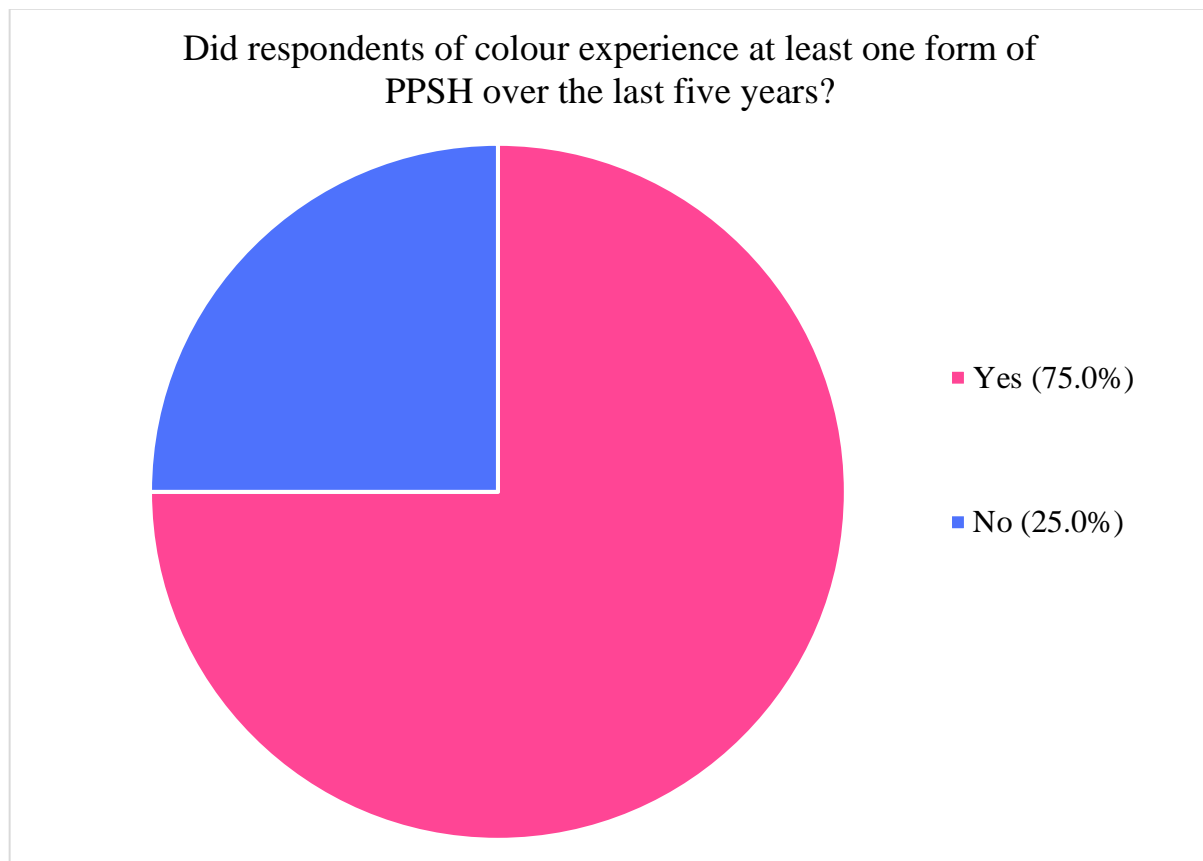


Figure 6. Results for whether respondents of colour experienced at least one form of PPSH

A chi-square test of independence showed that there was no statistically significant association between ethnicity and experience of sexual harassment, $X^2(1, N = 140) = 0.64, p. = .425$. This means that this study was unable to prove that there is a correlation between a public librarian's ethnicity and the probability that they would have experienced PPSH.

The inability of this study to prove a statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and sexual harassment is due to the sample size for librarians of colour being too small. This limitation exists despite the fact that this study's ratio of white respondents to respondents of colour was more balanced than the current UK library workforce. As stated, 97.0% of UK librarians identify as white and 3.0% identifying as people of colour (CILIP, 2018). In contrast,

83.9% of this study's respondents identified as white, with 14.0% identifying as people of colour and 2.1% not disclosing their ethnicity.

The difficulty of gathering a sufficiently large sample size for librarians of colour is a common challenge for academic studies of libraries and sexual harassment. Benjes-Small et al. (2021) were unable to draw any conclusions regarding ethnicity due to their small sample size of librarians of colour. Only 11.0% of their respondents identified as people of colour (Benjes-Small et al., 2021). The Oliphant group achieved a similar proportion for their study, with 9.5% of their respondents identifying as people of colour (Oliphant et al., 2021). However, their conclusions are not yet published (Allard, 2022b). Barr-Walker et al. (2019) and Barr-Walker et al. (2021) were also unable to comment on ethnicity, as to do so would risk respondent anonymity. As such, there is little material available for comparison to this study's results.

It is important to note that just because this study was unable to prove that there is a statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and sexual harassment does not mean that one does not exist. As discussed in the literature review, there are only a handful of studies that have investigated sexual harassment in libraries, and this study is the first to do so in the UK. Far more research is required in this area before it can be stated with any certainty that a librarian's ethnicity has no influence at all on the probability that they will experience PPSH.

6. Recommendations

As this study has shown, there is still much research to do on sexual harassment in public libraries, as well as other types of libraries, within the UK and internationally. In addition, there are numerous steps that libraries and professional organisations can take to address the widespread problem of PPSH. Based on the findings of this study, the following actions are recommended.

Research:

- Further research is necessary to understand sexual harassment in a variety of library contexts. This includes different types of libraries (e.g., academic, special collections) and different perpetrators (co-workers as well as library patrons).
- Future studies may focus on exploring the limitations of this study. These include how sexual harassment experiences differ for people of colour, gender diverse people, and underage individuals. These studies will require larger sample sizes than the ones acquired in this study and may benefit from a combined quantitative and qualitative methodology.
- Further research, particularly qualitative research, is required to understand the impact of sexual harassment on librarians, and to explore the other forms of sexual harassment that were not captured in this study.

Professional practice:

- Professional organisations, such as CILIP, should acknowledge and address the issue of PPSH within public libraries. This recognition should include a formal statement on the issue and advocating for or even providing sexual harassment training. In addition, CILIP could provide resources for individuals and workplaces on how to develop

sexual harassment policies and implement effective sexual harassment prevention procedures.

- Library management should review existing sexual harassment policies and training and implement changes where necessary. In addition, management could survey staff members anonymously to ascertain the scale of this issue within their individual workplaces.
- Sexual harassment education and training should be included in the curriculum for students studying librarianship.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate PPSH towards UK public librarians since 2017. Using an intersectional epistemology and quantitative methodology, this study fulfilled this purpose and answered the three research questions presented in the methodology. One of the key findings from this study was that 81.8% of respondents had experienced at least one form of PPSH in the last five years. In addition, the 143 respondents had experienced 14 of the 16 sexual harassment behaviours listed in the survey, with one of those 14 being ‘other forms of sexual harassment’ not listed in the survey.

Organising the 16 behaviours into four groups, based on the survey results, revealed further insights. The most common types of sexual harassment were indirect and more easily excusable behaviours, such as staring, inappropriate comments and jokes, and viewing pornography. Unsurprisingly, the more extreme, direct and physical forms of harassment were among the least commonly experienced. The survey results help illustrate the scale of PPSH in UK public libraries and the nature of the problem.

This study also produced findings for the third research question, which concerned the relationship between age, ethnicity, gender, and sexual harassment. Findings on age and ethnicity were limited due to the small sample size for these demographics. However, this study indicated that underage employees are vulnerable to PPSH. Additionally, although librarians of colour comprise only 3.0% of the UK librarian workforce, respondents of colour experienced PPSH at a fairly similar rate to white respondents. In regards to gender, this study found a statistically significant relationship between gender and sexual harassment, with female respondents being more likely to have been sexual harassment. Once again, the small sample

size for gender diverse librarians limited the findings for this group, but this may be an avenue for future researchers to pursue.

The findings of this dissertation are significant due to the scarcity of academic studies on sexual harassment in libraries, especially in the context of public libraries and the UK. However, the formative nature of this study is a double-edged sword. With minimal pre-existing groundwork, this study's scope was narrow, focusing on establishing essential data around PPSH in UK public libraries. Consequently, there are still many facets of sexual harassment in libraries for researchers and professionals to explore, as outlined in the recommendations section.

Overall, this study has affirmed the dominant narrative that sexual harassment is part of the job for librarians. This study not only supports the homogenous arguments presented in the literature review but has brought the discussion into a UK context. It has been almost thirty years since the first accounts of sexual harassment towards librarians were published, yet this issue has largely gone unaddressed. Hopefully, as more librarians and academics shine a light on this issue, librarians will finally receive the necessary support to address the problem of sexual harassment in libraries.

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Appendix

Sexual Harassment Survey

1. Have you worked as a librarian in a UK public library in the last five years?

- This work may be paid or unpaid.

- You do not need to have a library qualification to be considered a librarian.

- Yes
- No

2. During this five year period, were you at any stage under the age of 18?

- Yes
- No

3. What gender do you identify with?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe: _____

4. What is your ethnicity?

- Asian or Asian British
- Black, African, Caribbean or Black British
- White
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

Please indicate if you have experienced any of the following behaviours from **library patrons** whilst working as a public librarian in the UK during the last five years.

As a reminder, your answers are completely anonymous.

5. Displays of pornographic or sexually offensive materials which made you feel uncomfortable, including it being viewed near you

- Yes
- No

6. Unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual nature about you or others that made you feel uncomfortable

- Yes
- No

7. Unwelcome comments of a sexual nature about your body and/or clothes

- Yes
- No

8. Unwelcome catcalls, wolf-whistling or other provocative sounds

- Yes
- No

9. Unwelcome staring or looks which made you feel uncomfortable

- Yes
- No

10. Receiving unwanted messages with material of a sexual nature e.g. by text/messaging app, email, social media, instant chat, or another source

- Yes
- No

11. Feeling pressured by someone to date them or do a sexual act for them in exchange for something

- Yes
- No

12. Someone making persistent and/or unwanted attempts to establish a romantic and/or sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it

- Yes
- No

13. Someone taking and/or sharing sexual pictures or videos of you without your permission

- Yes
- No

14. Flashing (e.g. the deliberate exposure of someone's intimate parts)

- Yes
- No

15. Someone physically following you without your permission in a way that made you feel sexually threatened

- Yes
- No

16. Someone intentionally, brushing up against you or invading your personal space in an unwelcome, sexual way

- Yes
- No

17. Unwanted touching (e.g. placing hand on lower back or knee)

- Yes
- No

18. Unwanted, overt sexual touching (touching of the breasts, buttocks or genitals, attempts to kiss)

- Yes
- No

19. Rape and/or attempted rape

- Yes
- No

20. Any other forms of sexual harassment?

- Yes
- No