Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda

Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family

Prepared by

Organisation Religieuse des Témoins de Jéhovah

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Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda

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Section 4. Forgiveness & Prosocial Behavior

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CLS-H	Compassionate Love Scale for Humanity
CRSS	Community Resilience and Support Scale
DFS	Divine Forgiveness Scale
DSM-IV	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition
DSM-V	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition
DNK	Do not know
EST	Ecological Systems Theory
FISI	Four-Item Social Identification
HHI	Herth Hope Index
ICD-11	International Classification of Diseases, Eleventh Revision
JW	Jehovah's Witness
JWs	Jehovah's Witnesses
JW-RWA	*Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family*
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
M	Mean
MINUBUMWE	Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement
MRND	Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NOA	None of the above

ns	Not (statistically) significant
PNA	Prefer not to answer
PTG	Posttraumatic growth
PTSD	Posttraumatic stress disorder
PTSS	Posttraumatic stress symptoms
RCS	Rwanda Correctional Service
RNEC	Rwanda National Ethics Committee
RTLM	Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines
SCID-I	Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders
SD	Standard deviation
SDR	Socially Desirable Responses
SFDPS	Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale
T-CRS	Transcultural Community Resilience Scale

4. FORGIVENESS AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

The JW-RWA study examined Jehovah's Witnesses' attitudes related to the psychosocial concepts of forgiveness and other prosocial behaviors. This section outlines concepts, definitions, and theories of forgiveness and related variables. Definitions from JW literature are provided as the survey respondents' possible frame of reference when rating their attitudes and behaviors. Key findings from statistical analysis of survey responses identified consistent patterns in the attitudes and behaviors of the study population across demographic groups.

Literature Review

An overview of the scholarly literature provides background and context for the research findings. It highlights the significance of forgiveness and prosocial behavior in interpersonal relationships, with positive cumulative effects on social groups and the larger society.

Interpersonal, Divine, and Self-Forgiveness

Forgiveness, as a core focus of this study, has deep religious and philosophical roots as well as multifaceted psychosocial implications that profoundly impact personal, communal, and societal outcomes. Research has centered on three basic categories of forgiveness: interpersonal forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and divine forgiveness. JW-RWA investigated aspects of these three categories, using or adapting validated measures by leading forgiveness researchers and the empirical findings.

Early research into forgiveness was mainly carried out by clinical researchers in therapeutic fields, along with several pioneering social psychologists (Worthington, 1998). By the late 1990s, scientific studies accelerated, proposing definitions, theories, and processes of forgiveness, as well

as methods of empirical research (Worthington & Wade, 2020). The majority of early research was conducted with college students or those in close personal relationships, such as families or romantic partners (McCullough et al., 1998). Forgiveness researchers later broadened the field of study to situations of mass violence, including a few studies in Rwanda (e.g., Kubai, 2016; Ordóñez-Carabaño et al., 2020). Research findings have demonstrated connections between the three types of forgiveness, as well as between forgiveness and other prosocial attitudes, such as compassion, empathy, and caring. Forgiveness has been linked to positive outcomes, including psychological wellbeing, posttraumatic healing, behavior modification, and relationship repair (Long et al., 2020). On balance, forgiveness under certain conditions can lead to negative effects, such as depressive symptoms, imposing undue pressure on victims to forgive, or reducing the incentive for offenders to reform (Exline, 2013; McNulty, 2020; Staub, 2005).

Forgiveness and Religion

In Rwanda, official efforts toward forgiveness and reconciliation on a societal and individual level can be supplemented by religious communities that foster a readiness to forgive among their congregations. Researchers have long agreed that forgiveness and religious affiliation, activity, or attachment to God are linked; although how this relationship works has been unclear (Choe et al., 2020; Pargament & Rye, 1998). Escher (2013) proposed that “a person who has internalized a belief system in which forgiveness is a moral necessity is socialized into forgiving practices” (p. 103). Also important to Escher is one’s orientation toward God as a collaborator in living life and solving problems, as well as an Exemplar to imitate; and Escher attributes this orientation with causality in motivating forgiveness.

Interpersonal Forgiveness

The most commonly studied type of forgiveness involves situations in which one person or group has experienced a real or perceived wrong (e.g., by insult, injury, or injustice) and another is seen as having caused the wrong (Enright et al., 1998). Most definitions of forgiveness involve changing emotions toward the offender from negative to positive feelings or intentions. Some definitions go further by including an actual move on the part of the offended to repair or restore the relationship that was disrupted by the offense (Worthington, 2020). The propensity to extend forgiveness may be influenced by such factors as age (Garthe & Guz, 2020; Tao et al., 2021), culture (Sandage et al., 2020), personality type (Brose et al., 2005), and religion (Escher, 2013; Toussaint & Williams, 2008). Forgiving an offender may prompt the forgiver to show prosocial feelings and behaviors toward others (Karremans et al., 2005).

It has been commonly assumed that women forgive more than men. One theory held that increased forgiveness in females occurs because women prioritize preserving relationships, while men prioritize justice and social order. Another theory argued that since women are usually more religious than men, they receive more religious influence to forgive (Miller et al., 2008). Overall, however, studies have measured only small gender differences in trait forgiveness, and even these findings have been questioned (Kaleta & Mróz, 2022). As for age effects, Krause & Ellison (2003) found that older people tend to be more forgiving than younger ones, which may be related to the tendency of religiousness to increase with age.

Forgiveness can occur as a result of a deliberate (cognitive) decision or an emotional (affective) reaction (Worthington et al., 2007). An individual may be moved to forgive a specific person or single offense, called *situational* forgiveness. The general inclination to forgive across time and space is called *trait* or *dispositional* forgiveness (Hodge et al., 2020). Researchers have

also made clear what forgiveness does not mean: condoning, tolerating, or minimizing the wrong. Forgiving is neither synonymous with nor contingent on forgetting (Smedes, 1984). It need not be unconditional (Enright et al., 1998), nor should it be obligatory (Lamb, 2002).

Although broadly termed *interpersonal forgiveness*, some researchers suggest the term *intrapersonal forgiveness* to refer to the inner change of feelings or intentions toward the offender, such as relinquishing resentment or the right to retaliate, or viewing the offender empathetically. These internal changes mirror closely the etymological sense of the Greek biblical term, *a·phi'e·mi*, literally translated as "let go off" (cf. Jehovah's Witnesses—Official Website, n.d.). Letting go of resentment can take place whether or not the offender expresses remorse or is even known to the injured party. From both a religious and a therapeutic standpoint, by effecting intrapersonal forgiveness, the injured party may be able to reduce or even resolve bitter or angry feelings independent of an offender's contrition, which may or may not be forthcoming. *Hollow forgiveness* involves an outward expression or action signaling forgiveness without a corresponding inner feeling, perhaps in response to external pressure or social expectations to forgive (Baumeister et al., 1998). Conversely, *silent forgiveness* entails an inner decision or emotional change without an outward expression toward the offender. The latter might take place, for instance, if the victim fears that overtly expressing forgiveness may embolden the offender to repeat the wrong.

Similar to provisos in the research literature, JW study material explicitly states that forgiveness does not equate with condoning the sin but rather means the forgiver is "trustfully leaving the matter in Jehovah's hands. He is the righteous Judge" (*Watchtower*, 2022a, p. 10; cf. *Watchtower*, 2000[1]). Seeking revenge risks worsening a bad situation and perpetuating a cycle of

[1] After the notorious, race-related torture and murder of African-American James Byrd by three white men, three of Byrd's sisters, who are Jehovah's Witnesses, stated: "Retaliation, hateful speech, or promotion of hate-ridden propaganda never entered our mind. We thought: 'What would Jesus have done? How would he have responded?' The answer was crystal clear. His message would have been one of peace and hope" (*Watchtower,* 2000, p. 5).

hatred (*Watchtower*, 2022b). This view may have been reflected in responses indicating which scriptures were most helpful in coping with thoughts of the Genocide against the Tutsi. The top selection of JW-RWA respondents was *Return evil to no one. Vengeance belongs to God* (paraphrase of Romans 12:17, 19). Leaving the matter with God, in effect, relieves the victim of judging and avenging the wrong. (See Section 6, Subjective Social and Psychological Wellbeing, in this report.)

In considering how to measure interpersonal forgiveness, the research team elected to use a measure of trait forgiveness (Berry et al., 2005), rather than a situational measure that asks respondents to think of a particular offense when selecting responses (e.g., most recent, most hurtful, violent crime). Given the diversity of the sample population, including those in varied Genocide situations, as well as those who were not in Rwanda in 1994 or were born after 1994, a situational approach seemed problematic for this study since it would be unknown what type of offense(s) the respondent had in mind. Although responses to the forgiveness measures may plausibly reflect attitudes toward acts committed during the Genocide, particularly for those who were in Rwanda in 1994, this may not necessarily be the case. More meaningful for the overall objective of the study was the examination of forgiveness as a prosocial trait that could potentially contribute to community and societal recovery after the Genocide.

Divine Forgiveness

The concept of divine forgiveness is based on the perception that a higher power extends forgiveness for transgressions, either conditionally or unconditionally (Exline, 2020). In his article "Towards a Psychology of Divine Forgiveness," leading theorist Frank Fincham reviewed the sparse research on divine forgiveness, dating back to the late 1990s, and outlined an extensive future research agenda (Fincham, 2022). Although some early studies demonstrated correlations

between divine forgiveness and physical and mental health, most studies were cross-sectional and limited to US-based Christian populations. Fincham critiqued the use of a single item to measure divine forgiveness—"I believe God has forgiven me for the things I've done wrong" (e.g., Krause & Ellison, 2003, p. 83)—and called for a multi-item list that captured not only cognitive but emotional and behavioral responses toward perceived forgiveness by God. Fincham raised questions about the role of intrapersonal, interpersonal, religious, and cultural factors in differing perspectives of divine forgiveness. Researchers need to examine how belief in conditional versus unconditional divine forgiveness affects interpersonal forgiveness, as well as the association between divine and earthly (interpersonal) forgiveness.

From a biblical perspective, God is described as "ready to forgive" (Psalm 86:5; cf. *Watchtower*, 2022a, p. 2). While the biblical Greek word for forgiveness is applied to human relationships, usage of the biblical Hebrew word *sa·lach'* in the Old Testament is reserved for God alone, referring to pardoning a sinner (cf. Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2018). Hence, in JW literature, divine forgiveness is generally presented as contingent on repentance (*Watchtower*, 2024a).

The JW-RWA study included a measure of divine forgiveness that incorporated questions and concepts developed by Fincham and his colleagues, together with items that considered the religious culture of the target population (Fincham et al., 2020).

Self-Forgiveness

The concept of self-forgiveness strikes some as extremely offensive, assuming that it involves the idea that perpetrators of violence or passive bystanders can absolve themselves of guilt. However, as is true of interpersonal forgiveness, genuine self-forgiveness does not imply condoning or exonerating oneself of harmdoing. Self-forgiveness sits between self-exoneration,

by which an individual sees no need to change or take responsibility, and self-condemnation, by which an individual believes he cannot change and engages in self-hatred or self-punishment.

Genuine self-forgiveness is not about feeling better about oneself, but "it is about feeling right and doing right" (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2020, p. 23). Self-forgiveness is an elongated, arduous process that involves work and likely unpleasant feelings, and requires humility (Fisher & Exline, 2006; Hall & Fincham, 2005). Self-forgiveness begins with taking personal responsibility for one's actions or failures (Griffin et al., 2018). "Responsibility is understood in a moral sense as the acceptance of wrongdoing, its seriousness, the lack of justification, and acceptance of blame" (Wenzel, 2012, p. 620). It can involve a period of self-reflection on the causes, meaning, and consequences of a violation of shared values. This reflection can lead to value reaffirmation, recalling why values are important and the benefits experienced when they were followed in the past, thereby restoring the offender's agency in making things right and committing to change. At the same time, it is other-oriented, taking the perspective of the victim and showing empathy (Hall & Fincham, 2005). These are internal processes, but voluntary confession indicates a coming to terms with the transgression. While taking responsibility can lead to a more negative self-regard (e.g., due to guilt or shame), value reaffirmation breaks this negative response and allows positive self-regard to be the reaction.

A puzzling finding of some researchers was that self-forgiveness was related to lower empathy toward others, higher narcissism, selfishness, and low motivation to change, which could lead to a repeat or perpetuation of the behavior (Wenzel et al., 2012). On closer examination, researchers called this *pseudo-self-forgiveness* in offenders who put past offenses behind them but are not consumed with guilt or self-hatred and apparently view themselves positively (cf. Tsang, 2002). Pseudo-self-forgivers have not taken personal responsibility or reflected on their harmdoing;

rather, they avoid their victim and any thoughts and feelings associated with the sin, self-deception, and rationalization (Hall & Fincham, 2005).

Correlations Between Types of Forgiveness

Researchers have found certain relationships between types of forgiveness. For instance, higher levels of interpersonal forgiveness are related to divine forgiveness (Krause & Ellison, 2003). In two longitudinal studies, Fincham and May (2023) found that belief in divine forgiveness predicts interpersonal forgiveness, but not vice versa. This finding has implications for Christian traditions, including that of Jehovah's Witnesses, that highlight God's forgiveness as evidence of the possibility of closeness to God, followed by encouragement toward interpersonal forgiveness as "moral imperative" for Christians to imitate that divine model (cf. Fincham & May, 2023, p. 167). Of the three types of forgiveness, low self-forgiveness correlated most strongly with depressive symptoms. However, the depressive effects of low self-forgiveness can be moderated if a person has a strong belief in divine forgiveness (Fincham & May, 2019). Spiritual struggles can result from a perceived lack of forgiveness or love by God or from guilt or shame over not living up to one's standards (Desai & Pargament, 2015; Pargament & Exline, 2022; Zarzycka & Puchalska-Wasyl, 2020).

Prosocial Behaviors

Prosocial behaviors refer to actions that benefit others without the expectation of personal benefit (e.g., acts of kindness, helping, volunteering, and sharing), which are considered symbols of social responsibility and contribute to social harmony (Dovidio et al., 2006; Penner et al., 2005). JW-RWA investigated several aspects of prosocial behavior—compassionate love, community support, giving and receiving behaviors, and perceived changes in relationships since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.

Compassionate Love

Compassion as a prosocial construct is rooted in empirical and theoretical literature related to altruism and empathy (Batson, 2011). More than feelings of empathy, compassion is a desire to act to alleviate others' suffering (Singer & Klimecki, 2014). The altruistic tendencies of compassion can be inspired by religious and spiritual traditions (Saroglou, 2013). Developmental psychologists view compassion as an expression of generativity that promotes meaningfulness particularly during middle age and later life (Erikson et al., 1986/1994; Kahana et al., 2013).

Compassionate love is defined by Chiesi et al. (2020) as "awareness and understanding of one's suffering, connecting with the distress, and being emotionally and cognitively moved to alleviate suffering" (p. 1). "Compassionate love includes caring, tenderness, and a helpful orientation toward humanity as a whole, especially in times of suffering or need" (p. 2). Compassionate love correlates with reduced prejudice and more positive attitudes toward culturally diverse outgroups (Oosthuizen, 2021; Sprecher & Fehr, 2005) and contributes to positive ingroup and outgroup relations (Dovidio et al., 2010).

Changes in Interpersonal and Conflict Relationships

Interpersonal relations can become strained for any number of reasons, including religious differences. While religious change does not automatically result in familial conflict, religious similarity is generally linked to greater happiness and satisfaction in marital and parent-child relationships (Curtis & Ellison, 2002; Hendricks et al., 2024; Zimmerman et al., 2015). Although affiliation with a minority religion can potentially create tension in close relationships with those who have different beliefs, prosocial behaviors based on religious principles can have a moderating effect. A study of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kazakhstan reported generally positive changes in relationships with family and other proximate associates after respondents' conversion to the JW

faith (Auyezbek & Beisembayev, 2023). The JW-RWA study further explores the connection between prosocial behaviors and interpersonal relationships.

Community Resilience/Support and Helping Behavior

The study of resilience seeks to understand the ability of individuals and communities to cope with trauma or adversity. Social support is a key component in the functioning of society, especially in the wake of adversity. Both resilience and social support help protect against alcohol abuse, depression, and anxiety (Esparza-Reig et al., 2022).

Definitions of community resilience and the measures used to quantify such resilience differ widely (Patel et al., 2017). Cénat et al. (2021) examined two aspects of community resilience: (a) processes that enable a community to become functional again after a collective trauma and (b) the community's use of resources to facilitate the resilience of individual community members. Esparza-Reig et al. (2022) pointed to feelings of being socially supported as a predictor of prosocial behaviors. Not feeling supported by one's social network may "trigger antisocial behaviors that are harmful to the rest of society" (p. 1). Resilience "encourages individuals to manifest more prosocial behaviors and increase prosocial behaviors instead of focusing on themselves" (p. 1). "Feeling close to God" is also a strong predictor of prosocial behavior (Ciarrochi et al., 2003, p. 71).

Psychologists have argued that altruistic behavior instrumentalizes helping for self-interest, such as image enhancement or political advantage (Ciarrochi et al., 2003). However, such theories have been challenged by studies demonstrating that the values of empathy, volunteerism, principled giving, and altruism are also potent motivators for prosocial helping (Stürmer & Siem, 2017; Stürmer & Snyder, 2010). Personal autonomy in giving is associated with personal wellbeing (Rinner et al., 2022). Although altruistic giving is without the expectation of personal

gain, the norm of reciprocity means that within social groups, givers often become recipients of giving (Burger et al., 2008). Belief in a benevolent God predicted increased volunteering and prosocial attitudes, even toward a religious outgroup (Johnson et al., 2013).

Charitable activities carried out by Jehovah's Witnesses are self-supported and implemented by volunteers. These activities have not received much scholarly attention. Among sources of formal community support is a global network of disaster-relief volunteers who are mobilized on an as-needed basis, such as during disease outbreaks, natural and manmade disasters, and refugee crises. The JW national, regional, and headquarters offices coordinate distribution of material aid via local congregations to congregants and their families in times of need (Chu & Peltonen, 2024). At the local level, congregation elders arrange support by and for congregants spiritually, emotionally, and practically, such as with patient visitation, bereavement support, and disaster preparedness (*Watchtower*, 2024b; *Watchtower*, 2017). Materials for congregation study regularly encourage congregants to be attentive to one another's needs and to practice giving of emotional, material, and instrumental support, especially to vulnerable persons, such as orphans, widows, and frail older persons (*Watchtower*, 2008; *Watchtower*, 2014; *Watchtower*, 2018).

Results

The research findings from the JW-RWA study contribute to the empirical literature showing how Jehovah's Witnesses view and practice forgiveness and other prosocial attitudes and behaviors that could potentially contribute to positive relationships and resilient communities. The main variables investigated in this section include three types of forgiveness, together with compassionate love for humanity, and community resilience and support of congregation. Following a description of each measure, results are presented for the total sample, with charts showing the breakdown of responses to individual items in question sets. The Witnesses' responses

are analyzed by demographic groups: gender; adult age groups; the length of time since baptism; and Genocide experience for those who lived in Rwanda in 1994, Returnees who lived outside Rwanda at the time of the Genocide against the Tutsi, and the Post-Genocide Generation or early young adults. The results show a collective profile of salient psychosocial characteristics of the faith community in Rwanda.

Forgiveness

Three types of forgiveness were investigated: trait forgiveness, divine forgiveness, and self-forgiveness. Findings show the extent to which these characterize the study population.

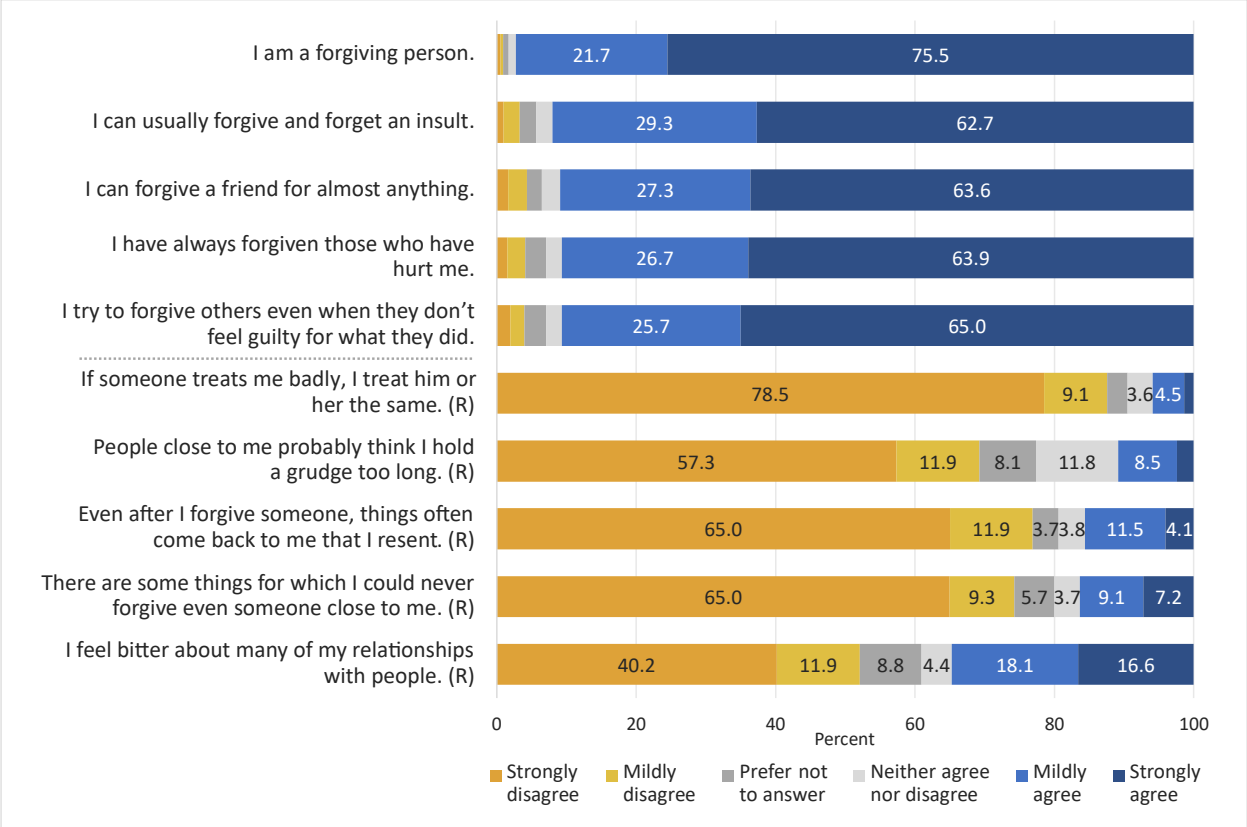
Trait Forgiveness

The 10-item Trait Forgivingness Scale (TFS) (Berry et al., 2005) was used to assess respondents' self-appraised disposition to forgive interpersonal transgressions. The measure consisted of five positively phrased statements (e.g., *I have always forgiven those who have hurt me*) and five negatively phrased statements (e.g., *Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent*). Respondents rated their degree of agreement on a 5-point scale, *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Negative statements were reverse scored and the sum total of the measure was used for statistical analysis, ranging from 10 to 50. Berry and his colleagues reported results from five studies they conducted to validate the TFS, which found mean scores of the college sample of all demographic groups well below 40 (mean scores between 30.4 to 36.6 with standard deviation ranging from 5.37 to 7.47). Four later studies used the TFS to assess trait forgiveness before and after subjects participated in forgiveness workshops and public health intervention programs, with pretest and posttest mean scores below 40 (pretest mean scores ranging from 35.1 to 36.8; posttest ranging from 37.1 to 38.0) (Ortega Bechara et al., 2024).

Figure 4.1 shows the 10 items and the breakdown of responses for each item. The findings show that the study population view themselves overall as being forgiving people with 97.21% agreeing to the single statement *I am a forgiving person*. The findings also show candidness of respondents and the realities of social relationships, with half (52.09%) indicating that they did not *feel bitter about many of [their] relationships*, and a third (34.69%) indicating *[feeling] bitter about many of [their] relationships*.

Figure 4.1

Trait Forgivingness Scale, Percentages of Responses by Item



Note. *N* = 13,586, total sample minus missing data. (R) indicates items that were reverse scored. Items are from the Trait Forgivingness Scale (TFS) developed by Berry et al. (2005).

Table 4.1 shows TFS mean scores and standard deviation by gender, age group, years baptized, and Genocide experience. With a possible range of 10 to 50, respondents showed consistently high scores over 43 across all demographic groups. The cumulative TFS mean scores for the JW sample population were higher than other sample populations using the same measure.

For the JW-RWA sample, no significant gender differences were found (males, $M = 43.84$; females, $M = 43.77$). Statistical differences in TFS mean scores for age groups were found, with incremental increases in scores with age. The TFS scores ranged from the youngest age group ($M = 43.03$, $SD = 5.58$) to the oldest age group ($M = 44.86$, $SD = 4.98$). However, when comparing the Genocide Generation (those who lived in Rwanda during the Genocide against the Tutsi) with Returnees (outside Rwanda during the Genocide) and the Post-Genocide Generation (born after 1994) in the Witness community, no statistical differences were found. The statistical differences in age groups did not carry over in the comparisons by Genocide experience. Similarly, no significant differences were found based on how long a person had been a baptized Witness. Developmental age was not a strong factor in TFS, but it was more salient than how long respondents were Jehovah's Witnesses or whether a person had first-hand experience or secondhand knowledge of the Genocide experience. Overall, the findings show consistency across demographic groups with a high degree of trait forgiveness as characteristic of the religious community.

Table 4.1

Trait Forgivingness Scale by Demographic Groups

Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Significance
Total Sample	10,912	43.80	5.44	-
Gender				
Male	5,009	43.84	5.41	*ns*
Female	5,903	43.77	5.47	
Age Group				
Early Young Adults	2,766	43.03	5.58	
Young Adults	3,084	43.46	5.71	$p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .013$
Middle-Aged Adults	4,000	44.32	5.15	
Older Adults	1,062	44.86	4.98	
Years as Baptized Jehovah's Witness				
JW for 29 Years or More (Baptized in or Before 1994)	518	44.86	4.92	
JW for 19 to 28 Years (Baptized 1995–2004)	2,523	44.27	5.21	
JW for 9 to 18 Years (Baptized 2005–2014)	4,266	43.72	5.59	*ns*
JW for 4 to 8 Years (Baptized 2015–2019)	2,704	43.38	5.53	
JW for 3 Years or Less (Baptized 2020–2023)	901	43.56	5.25	
Genocide Experience				
Genocide Generation	6,830	44.10	5.33	
Returnees	860	43.85	5.77	*ns*
Post-Genocide Generation	2,766	43.03	5.58	

Note. ANOVA tests were conducted on the total TFS score. A small statistically significant effect was found for age groups, $F(3, 10908) = 48.97$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .013$. Multiple post hoc Bonferroni comparison tests were conducted with adjusted *p* value for multiple comparisons, followed by Cohen's *d* calculations for effect size with the following: early young adults ($M = 43.03$, $SD = 5.58$) were significantly less than middle-aged adults ($M = 44.32$, $SD = 5.15$, $p < .001$) and older adults ($M = 44.86$, $SD = 4.98$, $p < .001$); young adults were significantly less than older adults ($p < .001$). Cumulative *n* varies depending on missing data.

Divine Forgiveness

To investigate Jehovah's Witnesses' views related to being forgiven by God, the survey included a Divine Forgiveness Scale (DFS) that was developed for the JW-RWA study and which incorporated concepts identified by other researchers (e.g., Fincham et al., 2020). Respondents

indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement with seven statements related to being forgiven by God.

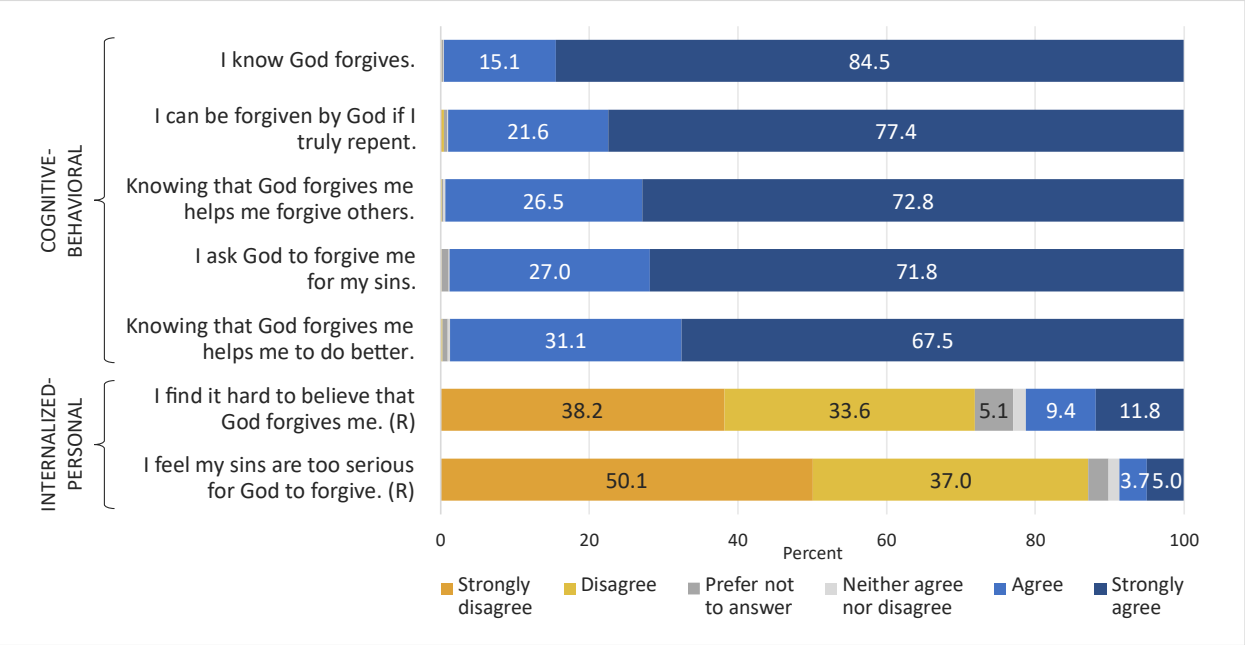
Five positive statements were related to cognitive-behavioral aspects of divine forgiveness: belief that God forgives, repentance, request for forgiveness, effort to do better, and extending forgiveness to others. Two negative statements were related to internalized-personal understanding of divine forgiveness—such as, feeling that it is *hard to believe that God forgives me* and that *my sins are too serious for God to forgive*. The two personalized items were phrased in the negative and reverse scored. On a 5-point scale, the possible cumulative score ranged from 7 to 35.[2]

Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of responses per item. The overwhelming majority of respondents believed in a forgiving God and indicated that their behaviors were consistent with repentance necessary for divine forgiveness, as taught by Jehovah's Witnesses. Most indicated that they believed in being personally forgiven by God. One fifth (21.25%) agreed with the statement *I find it hard to believe that God forgives me*, and over 5% of respondents selected *prefer not to answer*. The responses could reflect lack of self-forgiveness or an appreciation for divine forgiveness (e.g., feeling that *God forgives me*, but still finding the concept of a forgiving God *hard to believe* in their particular case). A portion of Jehovah's Witnesses (8.65%) indicated that they feel their *sins are too serious for God to forgive*. Data do not indicate the circumstances surrounding the "serious" wrongdoings that might or might not be related to the Genocide against the Tutsi but do indicate that some struggle spiritually with accepting and internalizing divine forgiveness.

[2] The survey instrument included an eighth statement, *No matter what I do, God forgives me*. This item was deleted from analysis because the intended meaning of the added statement was unclear and did not provide meaningful data.

Figure 4.2

Divine Forgiveness Scale, Percentages of Responses by Item



Note. *N* = 13,586, total sample minus missing data. (R) indicates items that were reverse scored. The divine forgiveness measure was adapted from Fincham (2022).

Statistical comparisons tested differences in cumulative DFS mean scores for the different demographic groups. As shown in Table 4.2, the total scores were consistently over 31 on a measure with 35 as the highest possible score. The low standard deviation (*SD*) for gender and length of time baptized showed little within-group variations.

Table 4.2

Divine Forgiveness Scale by Demographic Groups

Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Significance
Total Sample	12,035	31.87	2.93	-
Gender				
Male	5,337	32.14	2.89	*ns*
Female	6,698	31.65	2.94	
Age Group				
Early Young Adults	2,953	31.83	2.78	*ns*
Young Adults	3,366	32.02	2.88	
Middle-Aged Adults	4,522	31.83	3.00	
Older Adults	1,194	31.64	3.15	
Years as Baptized Jehovah's Witness				
JW for 29 Years or More (Baptized in or Before 1994)	599	32.37	2.81	*ns*
JW for 19 to 28 Years (Baptized 1995–2004)	2,824	32.20	2.83	
JW for 9 to 18 Years (Baptized 2005–2014)	4,699	31.82	2.96	
JW for 4 to 8 Years (Baptized 2015–2019)	2,930	31.63	2.96	
JW for 3 Years or Less (Baptized 2020–2023)	983	31.52	2.97	
Genocide Experience				
Genocide Generation	7,603	31.93	2.96	*ns*
Returnees	925	31.54	3.12	
Post-Genocide Generation	2,953	31.83	2.78	

Note. Missing data and PNA responses were removed. ANOVA tests were conducted on the total cumulative DFS score. No significant difference was found.

Self-Forgiveness

To assess self-forgiveness, the survey used a validated measure that could be used with different adult ages and circumstances (Griffin et al., 2018). The measure was framed with this introduction: *Sometimes we think back on situations when we did wrong or failed to do right. When that happens to you, how true or not true are the following 10 statements?* The measure used a 7-point scale with response options ranging from 1 for *not at all true of me* to 7 for *very true of me*. Respondents' answers could be in the context of any number of perceived wrongdoings with

varied degrees of seriousness. Understanding the focus of the study and the post-Genocide situation of the sample population, some respondents may have considered perceived failings during the Genocide; however, others may have answered the questions about perceived wrongdoings that were recent and relatively less serious. Despite this limitation, the measure provides useful information about the degree of perceived self-forgiveness.

The original Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale (SFDPS) used a two-factor model: reorientation of values and restoration of self-esteem. However, factor analysis for the JW study population had high factor loadings for three components that were characterized by responsibility, remorse, and self-esteem.

The factor analysis used the principal component analysis with varimax rotation using Kaiser normalization and an eigenvalue of greater than 1.0. The three factors accounted for a total of 58.26% of the variance for the entire set of 10 items. The three factors were as follows:

1. The Responsibility factor (3) had high loadings for two items related to acknowledging and not repeating wrongdoings. It accounted for 11.01% of extraction sums of squared loadings of the total variables.
2. The Remorse factor (2) had high loadings for three items related to taking back wrongdoing, violation of values, and violation of things important to me. It explained 16.55% of extraction sums of squared loadings of the total variables.
3. The Self-Acceptance factor (1) explained 30.70% of extraction sums of squared loadings of the total variables due to high loading of five items related to feeling valuable, self-acceptance, self-respect, self-compassion, and love of self.

The communalities of the variables included a range between 44% (for *would take back*) to 66% (for *I feel like a valuable person*) of the common variance with the other items. The Kaiser-Meyer-

Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity confirmed that the set of variables was adequately related for factor analysis. Table 4.3 shows the items and factor loadings for the SFDPS measure.

Table 4.3

Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale, Factor Analysis

Rotated Component Matrix			
Item	Component		
	1	2	3
I will try not to repeat my offense in the future.	−0.01	0.03	**0.78**
I acknowledge that I am to blame for my actions.	0.12	0.13	**0.72**
I would take back what I've done if I could.	0.03	**0.62**	0.22
I regret that my past actions violated my values.	0.02	**0.78**	0.11
My actions violated something that is important to me.	0.11	**0.79**	−0.13
Even though I did something wrong, I feel a sense of self-acceptance.	**0.69**	0.10	0.01
I feel like a valuable person despite my wrongdoing.	**0.81**	0.01	0.04
I still love myself even though I did wrong.	**0.76**	0.08	0.05
I respect myself even though I did wrong.	**0.81**	0.06	0.06
I feel compassion toward myself.	**0.75**	−0.02	0.04

Note. Principal component analysis: Rotation method was varimax with Kaiser normalization. Bolded numbers show the items that correspond to factor loadings. The three factors were labeled: 1. Self-Acceptance; 2. Remorse; and 3. Responsibility.

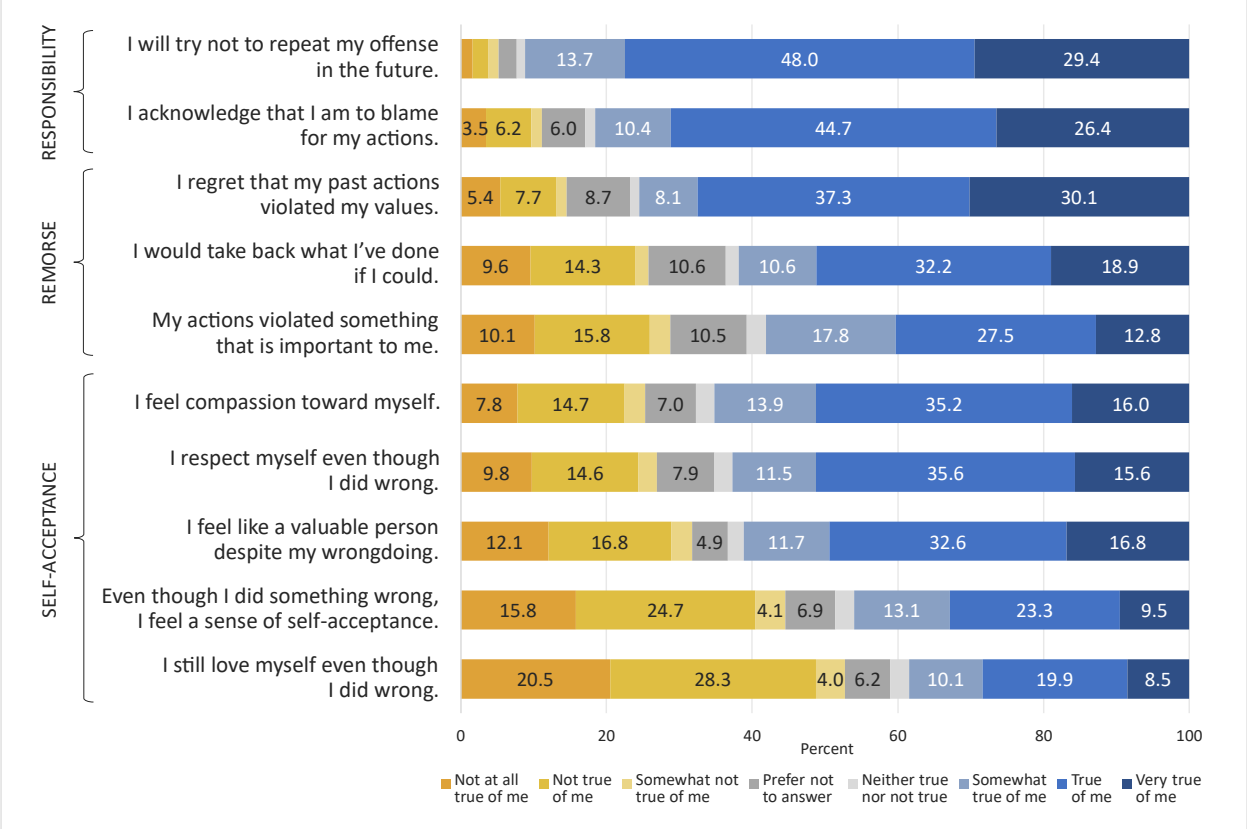
Figure 4.3 shows the breakdown of responses per item, including PNA responses. For JW respondents, the highest positive agreement was for the two items under the Responsibility factor, with over 90% indicating that they try to not repeat their offense and over 80% indicating that they acknowledge fault for their actions. As indicators of remorse, three fourths of respondents indicated having regrets for past actions that violated their values. Approximately 60% would take back wrongs if they could and felt their actions violated something important to them. The question

was broadly framed and the degree of seriousness of the actions or types of situations respondents had in mind cannot be known.

Overall, respondents viewed themselves as taking responsibility, not repeating, and feeling remorse for wrongdoings. In the context of past transgressions, most respondents reported having self-compassion, respect, and worth; but many indicated they do not feel a sense of self-acceptance or still love themselves even after doing something wrong. For some, a high degree of self-acceptance despite wrongdoing would be contradictory to their taking responsibility and feeling remorse.

Figure 4.3

Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale, Percentages of Responses by Item



Note. *N* = 13,586, total sample minus missing data. Items are from the Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale developed by Griffin et al. (2018).

Analysis was conducted to compare SFDPS by demographic groups. As shown in Table 4.4, no statistical differences were found in any group for the total SFDPS score or the subscales of Responsibility, Remorse, and Self-Acceptance. The mean and standard deviation show a consistent pattern with some variations among respondents.

Table 4.4

Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale by Demographic Groups

Group	*n*	Total Score (Range 10–70)	Responsibility (Range 2–14)	Remorse (Range 3–21)	Self-Acceptance (Range 5–35)	Significance
		M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	
Total Sample	9,851	48.42 (10.28)	11.59 (2.12)	15.05 (4.34)	21.77 (8.06)	-
Gender						
Male	4,574	48.48 (10.05)	11.66 (2.07)	15.37 (4.18)	21.44 (7.89)	*ns*
Female	5,277	48.36 (10.48)	11.53 (2.15)	14.78 (4.45)	22.05 (8.20)	
Age Group						
Early Young Adults	2,505	48.38 (9.68)	11.45 (2.08)	15.34 (4.45)	21.60 (7.58)	*ns*
Young Adults	2,809	48.45 (10.16)	11.56 (2.07)	15.26 (4.29)	21.63 (7.96)	
Middle-Aged Adults	3,561	48.29 (10.61)	11.61 (2.20)	14.80 (4.30)	21.87 (8.21)	
Older Adults	976	48.86 (10.93)	11.98 (1.95)	14.65 (4.26)	22.23 (8.91)	
Years as Baptized Jehovah's Witness						
JW for 29 Years or More (Baptized in or Before 1994)	437	47.26 (10.64)	11.86 (1.95)	14.66 (4.40)	20.74 (8.30)	*ns*
JW for 19 to 28 Years (Baptized 1995–2004)	2,211	48.10 (10.41)	11.67 (2.08)	14.83 (4.30)	21.60 (8.12)	
JW for 9 to 18 Years (Baptized 2005–2014)	3,897	48.52 (10.19)	11.63 (2.09)	15.28 (4.30)	21.61 (8.10)	
JW for 4 to 8 Years (Baptized 2015–2019)	2,470	48.76 (10.07)	11.50 (2.15)	15.14 (4.36)	22.12 (7.94)	
JW for 3 Years or Less (Baptized 2020–2023)	836	48.32 (10.78)	11.36 (2.29)	14.53 (4.64)	22.43 (7.90)	

Table 4.4 (continued)

Genocide Experience						
Total	9,460	48.44 (10.24)	11.60 (2.11)	15.07 (4.37)	21.76 (8.05)	*ns*
Genocide Generation	6,192	48.63 (10.41)	11.70 (2.08)	15.04 (4.26)	21.90 (8.20)	
Returnees	763	47.03 (10.57)	11.34 (2.39)	14.45 (4.48)	21.24 (8.28)	
Post-Genocide Generation	2,505	48.38 (9.68)	11.45 (2.08)	15.34 (4.45)	21.60 (7.58)	

Prosocial Behaviors

This section reports findings on variables related to prosocial behaviors—compassionate love, community support, giving and receiving behaviors, and perceived changes in relationships since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses.

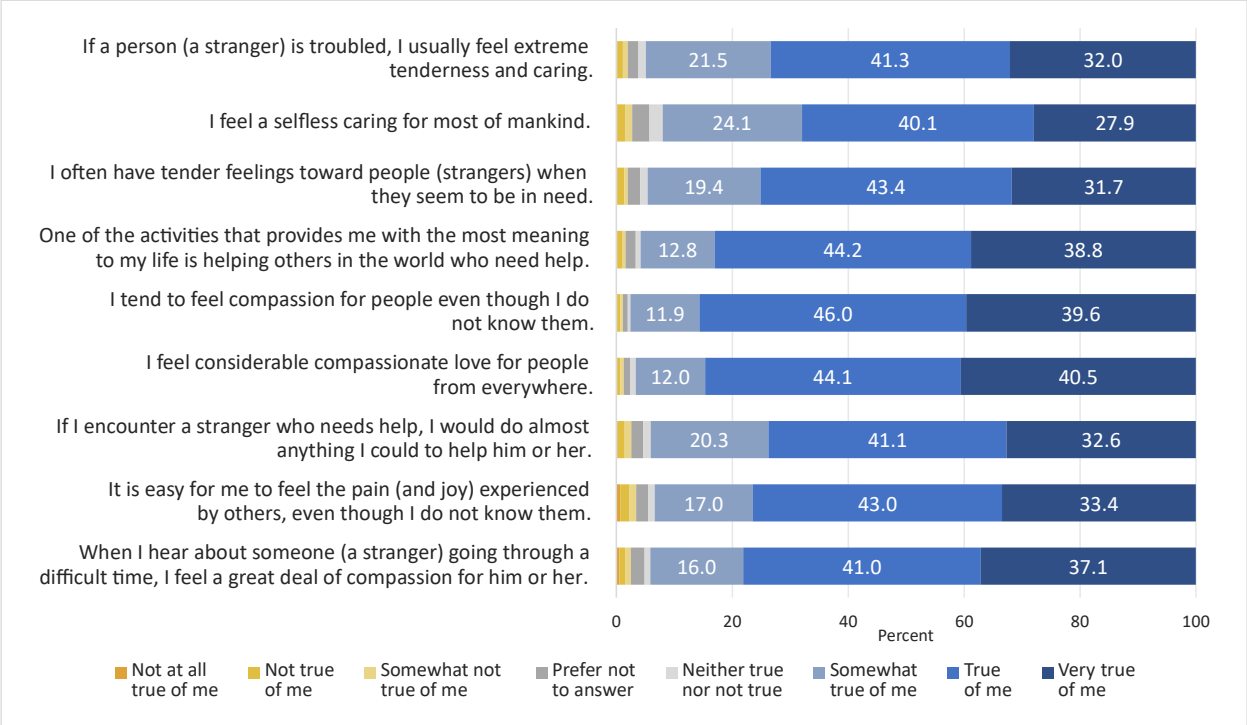
Compassionate Love for Humanity

The survey included the revised short version of the Compassionate Love Scale for Humanity (CLS-H) to measure "compassion towards strangers who need help and/or are vulnerable" (Chiesi et al., 2020, p. 20). The one-factor measure consisted of nine items on a 7-point scale from 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 7 (*very true of me*).

Figure 4.4 shows the responses for each of the items. Respondents had a consistent pattern of agreement that the statements were true of them, with considerable variation in the degree of agreement. Considering the religious culture of the study population with love as a foundational tenet, the high proportion of those who perceived themselves as having compassionate love for humanity was expected. A small percentage indicated that they thought certain CLS-H statements were not true of them (e.g., *It is easy for me to feel the pain (and joy) experienced by others, even though I do not know them*).

Figure 4.4

Compassionate Love Scale for Humanity, Percentages of Responses by Item



Note. *N* = 13,587, total sample minus missing data. Items are from the short version of the Compassionate Love Scale for Humanity (CLS-H-SF) developed by Chiesi et al. (2020).

As shown in Table 4.5, with a possible score ranging from 9 to 63 on the CLS-H scale, the mean of the total score for the JW sample was 54.84. A breakdown by demographic group showed that no group had scores under 53. Comparisons of demographic groups found no differences for gender or length of time being Jehovah's Witnesses. Statistical differences were found for age groups and Genocide experiences.

Table 4.5

Compassionate Love for Humanity by Demographic Groups

Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Significance
Total Sample	12,468	54.84	6.19	-
Gender				
Male	5,575	54.62	6.45	*ns*
Female	6,893	55.01	5.96	
Age				
Early Young Adults	3,058	53.79	6.44	
Young Adults	3,447	54.48	6.38	$p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .017$
Middle-Aged Adults	4,723	55.38	5.93	
Older Adults	1,240	56.37	5.39	
Years as Baptized Jehovah's Witness				
JW for 29 Years or More (Baptized in or Before 1994)	605	55.51	5.82	
JW for 19 to 28 Years (Baptized 1995–2004)	2,955	55.19	6.00	
JW for 9 to 18 Years (Baptized 2005–2014)	4,859	54.66	6.33	*ns*
JW for 4 to 8 Years (Baptized 2015–2019)	3,059	54.56	6.19	
JW for 3 Years or Less (Baptized 2020–2023)	990	55.08	6.16	
Genocide Experience				
Total for Subgroup	11,880	54.85	6.17	
Genocide Generation	7,882	55.24	6.03	$p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .010$
Returnees	940	55.00	5.96	
Post-Genocide Generation	3,058	53.79	6.44	

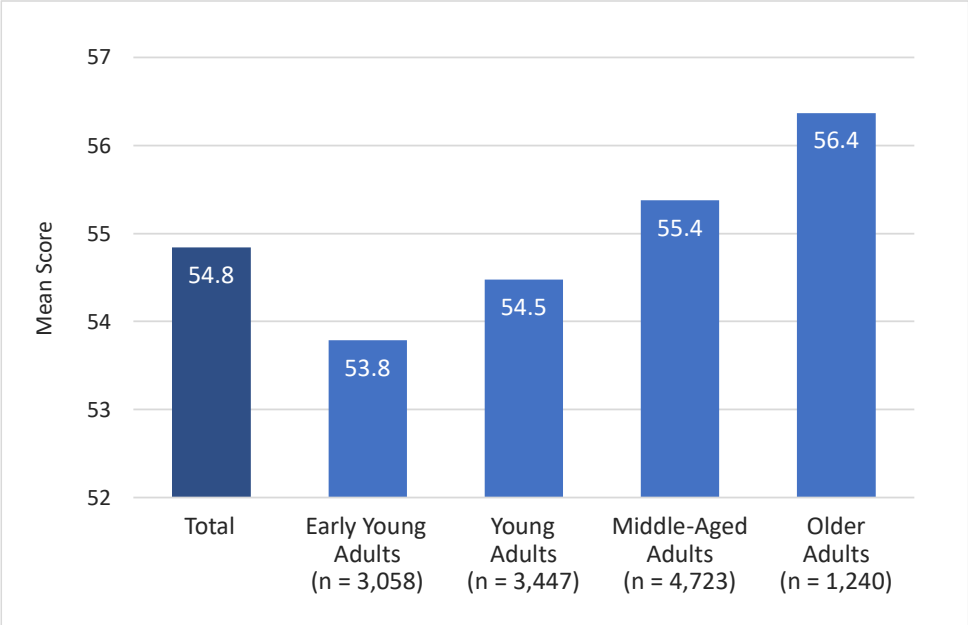
Note. Analysis for age-group comparisons: ANOVA test conducted on age groups found a small statistically significant effect, $F(3, 12464) = 71.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .017$. Multiple post hoc Bonferroni comparison tests were conducted with adjusted *p* value for multiple comparisons, followed by Cohen's *d* calculations for effect size. CLS−H scores were significantly less for early young adults ($M = 53.79$, $SD = 6.44$) than middle-aged adults ($M = 55.38$, $SD = 5.93$, $p < .001$) and older adults ($M = 56.37$, $SD = 5.39$, $p < .001$). CLS-H scores for young adults were significantly less than older adults ($p < .001$).

Analysis for the three groups based on Genocide experience: ANOVA test conducted on the total CL (compassionate love) score indicated a small statistically significant mean variance between Genocide-related groups, $F(2, 11877) = 62.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Post hoc Bonferroni comparison tests were conducted with adjusted *p* value for multiple comparisons, followed by Cohen's *d* calculations for effect size. CLS-H for the Genocide Generation ($M = 55.24$, $SD = 6.03$) was significantly higher than the Post-Genocide Generation ($M = 53.79$, $SD = 6.44$, $p < .001$) but not different from Returnees. Returnees' CL score ($M = 55.00$, $SD = 5.96$) was significantly higher than the Post-Genocide Generation ($p < .001$).

Figure 4.5 shows the incremental increase in compassionate love scores for each age group.

Figure 4.5

Compassionate Love for Humanity, Age Group Differences in the Mean of Total Score

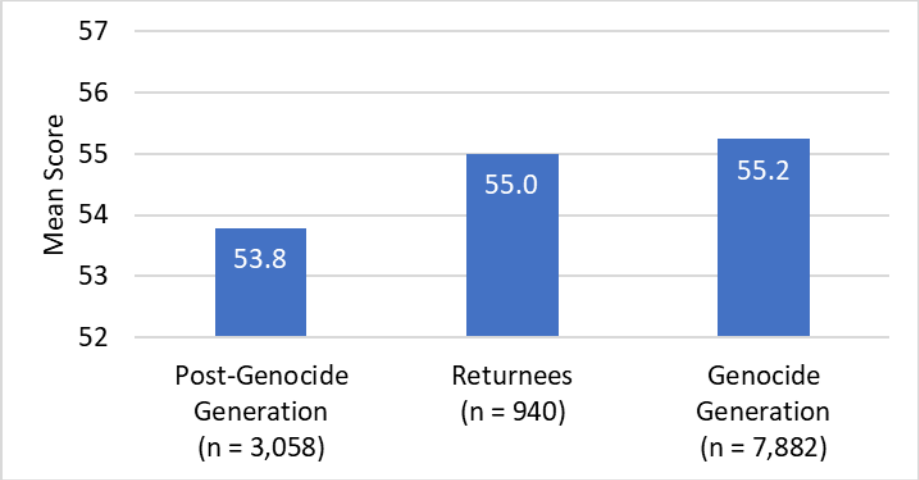


Note. *N* = 12,468. ANOVA test revealed significant variance between age groups on the cumulative CLS-H score. With the increase of age, the CLS-H scores increased.

Differences in compassionate love were also found between those who lived in Rwanda at the time of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, those who were Returnees, and the Post-Genocide Generation born after 1994. Unlike the Trait Forgiveness findings with age-group differences but not Genocide-experience differences, compassionate love showed significant differences for each demographic subgroup. The differences in CLS-H scores shown in Figure 4.6 may be related to the developmental age differences, as noted above in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.6

Compassionate Love for Humanity by Genocide-Related Groups



Note. *N* = 11,880. ANOVA test conducted on the total CLS-H score found a significant difference in the mean variances between Genocide-related groups. The results show that Genocide-Generation and Returnees have a significantly higher score compared with Post-Genocide Generation.

Community Resilience and Support

The resilience of a community or social group depends much on the degree to which its members feel supported and available during difficult times such as during natural disasters and/or pandemics. This applies to religious communities that support those in local congregations. To measure how respondents viewed their religious community's ability to provide them support when they faced difficulties, the Transcultural Community Resilience Scale (T-CRS) was revised and used. The measure was developed and tested in several countries, including Rwanda (Cénat et al., 2021).

For purposes of the JW-RWA study, the revised measure, Community Resilience and Support Scale (CRSS), used 10 items from the original 29-item T-CRS measure. The items selected had the highest factor loadings and could be applied to a religious community. The word *community* was changed to read *congregation*. On the 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to

5 (*strongly agree*), the range for the cumulative score was 10 to 50. Using factor analysis, the 10 items had high loadings as a one-dimensional scale, as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Community Resilience and Support Scale, Factor Analysis

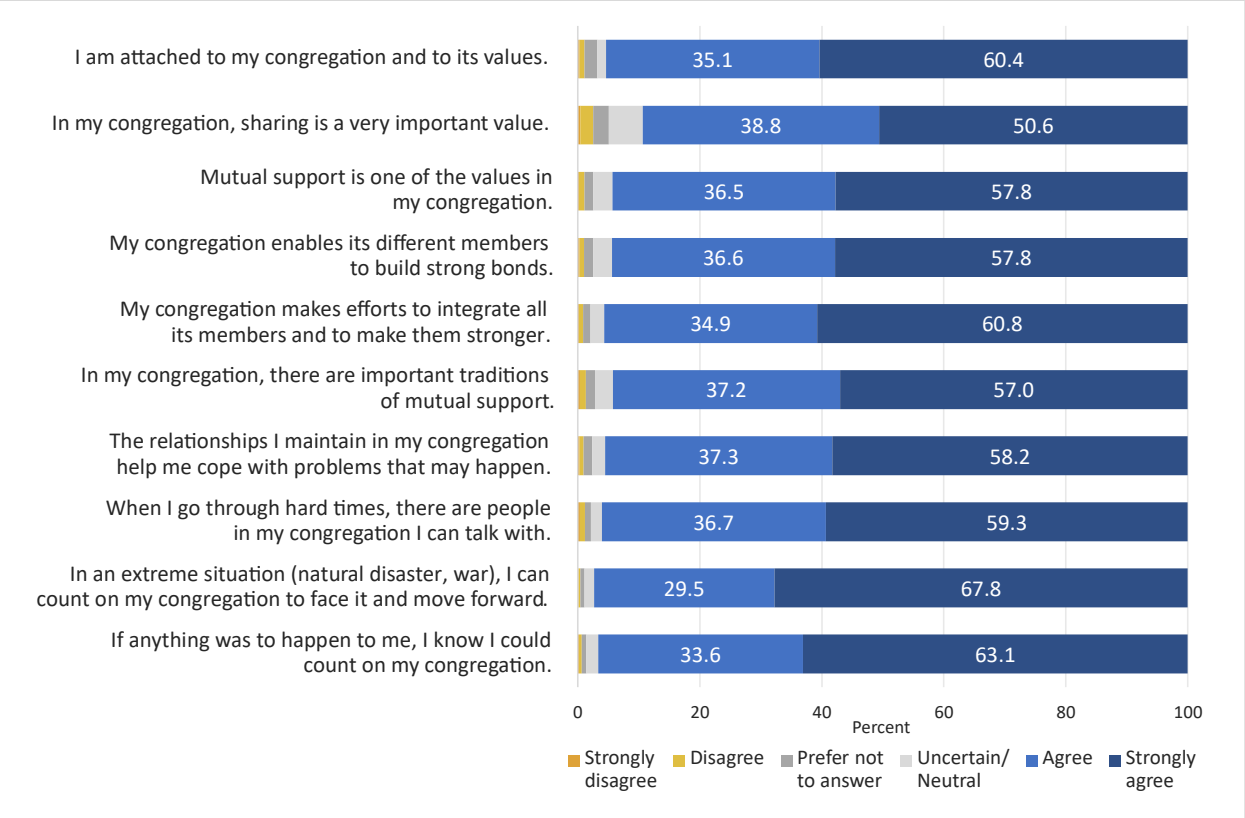
Component Matrix	Component
	1
If anything was to happen to me, I know I could count on my congregation.	0.76
In the event of an extreme situation (natural disaster, war, etc.), I know that I can count on my congregation to face the event and move forward.	0.77
When I go through hard times, there are people in my congregation I can talk with.	0.74
The relationships I maintain in my congregation help me cope with problems that happen to me or that may happen.	0.78
In my congregation, there are important traditions of mutual support.	0.82
My congregation makes efforts to integrate all its members and to make them stronger.	0.84
My congregation enables its different members to build strong bonds.	0.84
Mutual support is one of the values in my congregation.	0.84
In my congregation, sharing is a very important value.	0.76
I am attached to my congregation and to its values.	0.64

Note. Factor analysis used the principal component analysis with varimax rotation using Kaiser normalization and an eigenvalue of greater than 1.0. The results show one factor loading that accounts for a total of 61.27% of the variance for the entire set of 10 items. The communalities of the variables included a range between 41% (for *attached to my congregation*) to 71% (for *integrate all its members* and *build strong bonds*) of the common variance with the other items. The KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity confirmed (0.93) that the set of variables were adequately related for factor analysis. With only one component extracted, rotation was not applied.

Figure 4.7 shows the percentage of responses for each of the 10 statements. The findings show a consistent pattern with 90% of respondents viewing their congregations as a reliable source of support during difficult times.

Figure 4.7

Community Resilience and Support Scale, Percentages of Responses by Item



Note. *N* = 13,589, total sample minus missing data. The ten-item revised measure was derived from the Transcultural Community Resilience Scale (T-CRS) developed by Cénat et al. (2021).

The mean and standard deviation of the cumulative score for Community Resilience and Support are shown in Table 4.7. With 50 as the top score, the mean score across all demographic groups was not less than 45, reflecting the respondents' view of their congregation as being able to provide practical and emotional support during unexpected or difficult times.

Table 4.7

Community Resilience and Support by Demographic Groups

Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Significance
Total Sample	12,604	45.67	4.69	-
Gender				
Male	5,609	45.79	4.66	*ns*
Female	6,995	45.57	4.71	
Age Group				
Early Young Adults	3,011	45.13	5.03	*ns*
Young Adults	3,466	45.61	4.85	
Middle-Aged Adults	4,876	45.93	4.37	
Older Adults	1,251	46.10	4.45	
Years as Baptized Jehovah's Witness				
JW for 29 Years or More (Baptized in or Before 1994)	622	46.03	4.32	*ns*
JW for 19 to 28 Years (Baptized 1995–2004)	3,017	45.91	4.46	
JW for 9 to 18 Years (Baptized 2005–2014)	4,909	45.52	4.81	
JW for 4 to 8 Years (Baptized 2015–2019)	3,034	45.47	4.86	
JW for 3 Years or Less (Baptized 2020–2023)	1,022	46.02	4.40	
Genocide Experience				
Total for Subgroup	12,008	45.67	4.69	*ns*
Genocide Generation	8,033	45.87	4.55	
Returnees	964	45.75	4.60	
Post-Genocide Generation	3,011	45.13	5.03	

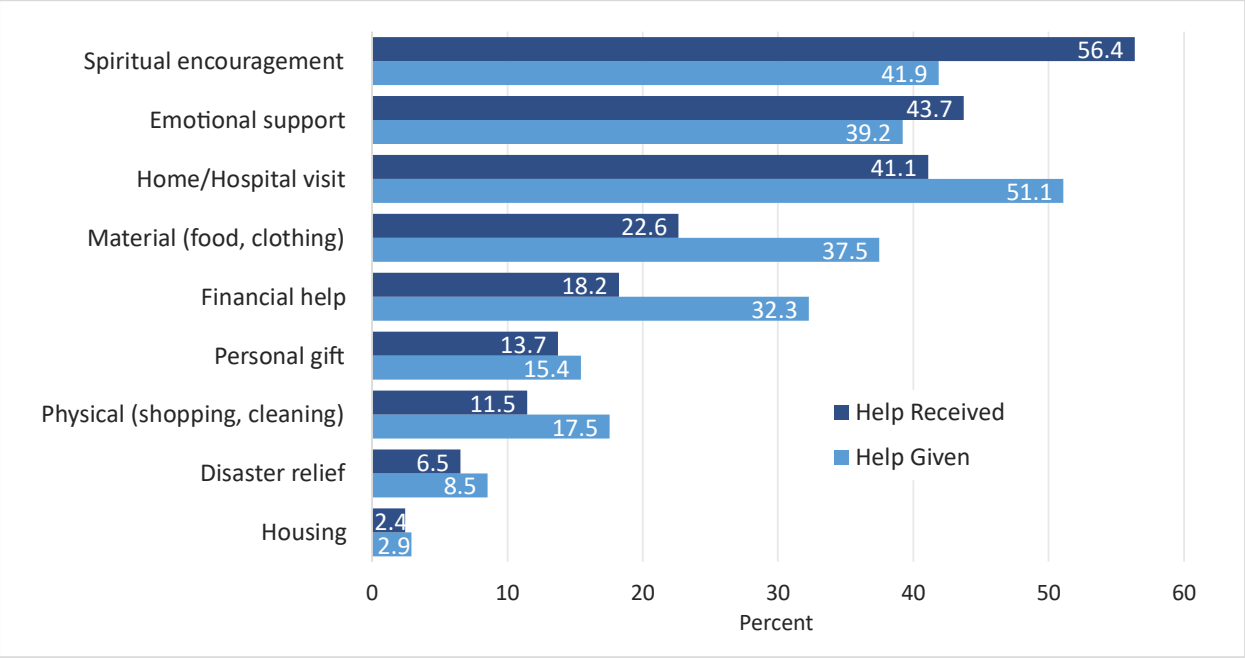
Helping Behaviors—Giving and Receiving

The degree of community or congregation support for the JW sample population was further investigated not only by their general perception of support in the congregation but also the degree to which giving and receiving help was reported. The survey asked respondents two separate questions about giving and receiving help in the congregation: *In the past year, did you or your family [give/receive] help from any of Jehovah's Witnesses in the following ways?* The list of nine items, shown in Figure 4.8, included instrumental help (e.g., physical assistance, shopping, cleaning), material and financial help, and emotional and spiritual help. The help respondents reported receiving most was *spiritual encouragement*. They perceived receiving more spiritual and

emotional support than they gave but reported giving more instrumental support than they received. Findings suggest that giving to those in need was shared by many in the congregation. For example, approximately one fifth received *material* assistance (22.6%) and *financial help* (18.2%) with approximately one third of congregants providing *material* assistance (37.5%) and *financial help* (32.3%).

Figure 4.8

Giving and Receiving Help Among Jehovah's Witnesses



Note. *N* = 11,047, total of respondents who reported both giving help and receiving help.

Changes in Interpersonal and Conflict Relationships

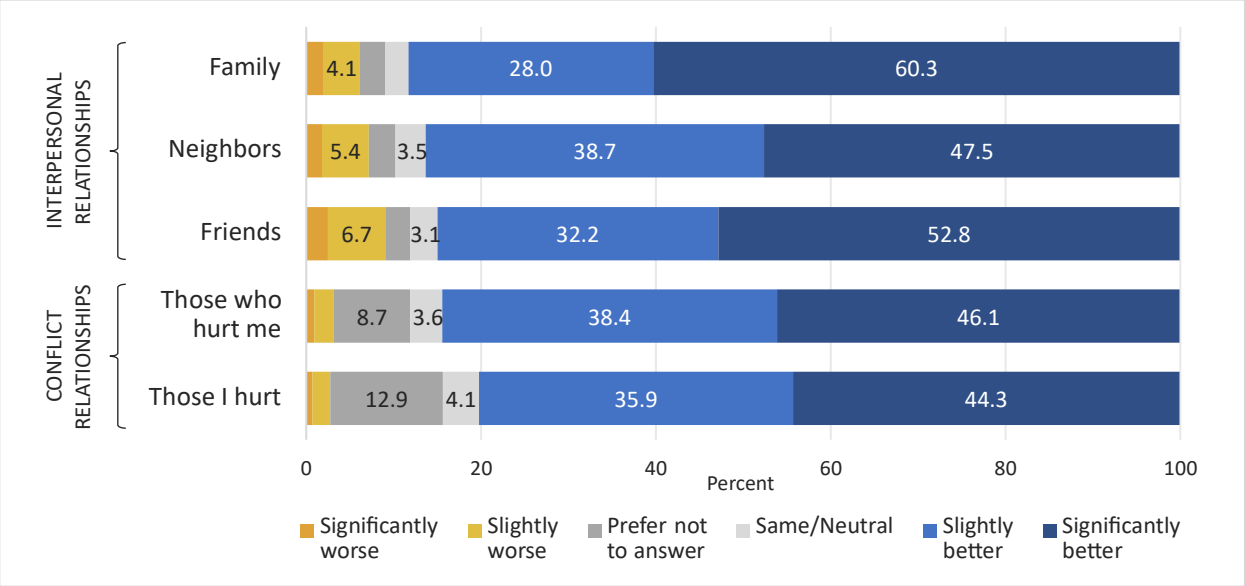
The survey asked respondents how their current relationships compared with the time before they became Jehovah's Witnesses. Respondents rated two types of relationships—interpersonal relationships and conflict relationships—on a 5-point scale: *significantly worse*, *slightly worse*, *same or neutral*, *slightly better*, and *significantly better*, with the higher number representing more positive change. Changes in interpersonal relationship were rated for three

groups: *family*, *friends*, and *neighbors*. Ratings of change in conflict relationship ratings were for two groups: *those I have hurt or offended* and *those who hurt or offended me*.

Figure 4.9 shows the percentages of responses for each relationship category. Respondents perceived all relationships as improving since they became Jehovah's Witnesses. Across all interpersonal relationships, 85% or more indicated better relationships—slightly more for family relationships. On the 5-point measure, mean scores for perceived relationship changes were slightly higher for *family* (4.48) compared with *friends* (4.34) and *neighbors* (4.32).

Figure 4.9

Perceived Change in Relationships Since Becoming Jehovah's Witnesses



Note. *N* = 13,585, total sample minus missing data.

As shown in Table 4.8, no statistically significant differences were found in perceived changes in interpersonal relationships for gender or age groups; however, relationship changes were significantly better the longer respondents had been Jehovah's Witnesses.

Table 4.8

Relationship Changes, Interpersonal and Conflict Changes by Demographic Groups

Group	*n*	Interpersonal Relationships			Conflict Relationships		
		M	*SD*	Significance	*M*	*SD*	Significance
Total Sample	11,293	13.14	2.28	-	8.81	1.36	-
Gender							
Male	5,047	13.31	2.13	*ns*	8.84	1.30	*ns*
Female	6,246	13.01	2.38		8.79	1.41	
Age Group							
Early Young Adults	2,788	13.05	2.26	*ns*	8.83	1.37	*ns*
Young Adults	3,153	13.24	2.21		8.85	1.30	
Middle-Aged Adults	4,252	13.12	2.29		8.78	1.38	
Older Adults	1,100	13.18	2.42		8.76	1.45	
Years as Baptized Jehovah's Witness							
JW for 29 Years or More (Baptized in or Before 1994)	512	13.50	1.96	$p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .010$	8.87	1.32	*ns*
JW for 19 to 28 Years (Baptized 1995–2004)	2,638	13.36	2.13		8.84	1.31	
JW for 9 to 18 Years (Baptized 2005–2014)	4,395	13.20	2.28		8.82	1.36	
JW for 4 to 8 Years (Baptized 2015–2019)	2,825	12.99	2.32		8.78	1.39	
JW for 3 Years or Less (Baptized 2020–2023)	923	12.56	2.56		8.79	1.48	
Genocide Experience							
Genocide Generation	7,085	13.18	2.28	*ns*	8.80	1.37	*ns*
Returnees	887	13.14	2.30		8.85	1.31	
Post-Genocide Generation	2,788	13.05	2.26		8.83	1.37	
Total for Subgroup	10,760	13.14	2.28		8.81	1.37	

Note. N = 11,293. ANOVA tests indicated a small statistically significant effect of length of time baptized on perceived changes in interpersonal relationships score, $F(4, 11288) = 28.14$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .01$. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test, accounting for multiple comparisons with adjusted p value for multiple comparisons, followed by Cohen's d calculations for effect size, revealed that the longer the period of time baptized, the higher the interpersonal score becomes. Therefore, those baptized in or before 1994 (M = 13.5, SD = 1.96) had higher scores compared with those baptized from 2015 to 2019 (M = 12.99, SD = 2.32, $p < .001$) and in or after 2020 (M = 12.56, SD = 2.56, $p < .001$). No significant effect was found for those baptized from 1995 to 2004 (M = 13.36, SD = 2.13) or 2005 to 2014 (M = 13.20, SD = 2.28). The same pattern was observed for those baptized from 1995 to 2004 with a significantly greater score than those baptized in or after 2020 ($p < .001$); Those baptized from 2005 to 2014 had a significantly greater score than those baptized in or after 2020 ($p < .001$).

Relationship of Forgiveness and Prosocial Variables

Table 4.9 shows the Pearson correlation matrix for forgiveness and prosocial variables discussed in this section. Self-forgiveness and trait forgiveness were not significantly related. All other forgiveness and prosocial variables were interrelated: trait forgiveness, divine forgiveness, self-forgiveness, compassionate love for humanity, and community resilience and support.

Table 4.9

Correlation Matrix of Forgiveness and Prosocial Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1-Trait Forgiveness							
2-Divine Forgiveness	.23**						
3-Self-Forgiveness	−.01	.05**					
4-Compassionate Love	.38**	.20**	.12**				
5-Community Resilience	.35**	.34**	.09**	.39**			
6-Interpersonal Relationships	.24**	.13**	.03*	.20**	.21**		
7-Conflict Relationships	.31**	.16**	.03*	.26**	.26**	.58**	

Note. *N* = 7,433. *Correlation (2-tailed) is significant at .05 level. **Correlation (2-tailed) is significant at .01 level.

Conclusion

The findings discussed in this section allow the possibility to explore correlations between the religious characteristics described in the previous section and views on forgiveness and other psychosocial characteristics described herein. This is the case with concepts that have been studied both from a social science perspective and as an explicit part of the religious teaching of the JW community. The study's focus on three aspects of forgiveness is based on its centrality to the process of post-Genocide intrapersonal and interpersonal healing. Related variables also contribute to the understanding of relationships and attitudes of respondents toward fellow congregants as well as in their social attitudes and interactions as a whole.

Based on the statistical analysis of the survey responses, Jehovah's Witnesses showed a consistent and positive pattern in the three measures of forgiveness: trait forgiveness, divine

forgiveness, and self-forgiveness. Trait forgiveness was consistently high (positive) across all demographic groups and with low variance in mean scores. To show the significance of the findings, when compared with other sample populations who were tested using the same measure of trait forgiveness, the JW sample in post-Genocide Rwanda showed higher trait forgiveness than all other study populations in developed countries, including those who participated in programs intended to improve forgiveness among participants.

Results on divine forgiveness found that almost all Jehovah's Witnesses in the study believe "God forgives." They also uniformly agree that divine forgiveness involves asking for God's forgiveness and being truly repentant, and the knowledge that God forgives helps them to do better and to forgive others. Although the vast majority of respondents believe in principle that God forgives, some indicated that they did not believe they were personally forgiven by God for past wrongdoings. The study did not identify what perceived wrongs respondents had in mind when answering the question, but those who viewed their past "sins" as being "too serious" struggled with believing that divine forgiveness could be applied to their personal situation.

For the JW study population, the measure of self-forgiveness was multidimensional, with three factors: responsibility, remorse, and self-esteem. The survey question was framed in the broad context of doing wrong or failing to do right, and it did not identify the nature or seriousness of respondents' perceived wrongdoing. Still, with this limitation, findings give insight into the thinking and feelings of the Witness community.

Self-forgiveness responses regarding self-esteem were compatible with those related to taking responsibility and feeling remorse for the wrongdoing. Seeming ambiguity about believing in God's forgiveness but not feeling forgiven by God may be understood by considering the context of these items related to self. The questions related to self-esteem were posed in the context

of having committed some perceived wrong. Self-acceptance and love of self in the context of doing wrong would be incompatible with taking responsibility and showing remorse. This is different from generalized perceptions of self-worth, opinion of self, and emotional wellbeing since becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses, attitudes that were also investigated in the survey. (Findings are reported in Section 6, Subjective Social and Psychological Wellbeing.)

The self-reported measure of compassionate love for humanity showed a similar congruent and positive pattern. Variations in responses were in the degree to which respondents viewed themselves as having compassion for others. As with the findings on the three types of forgiveness, a small percentage of respondents indicated that they did not view themselves as having compassion for humanity.

The research findings show that respondents favorably assessed the congregation's ability to provide instrumental and emotional support, strengthening their confidence in their ability to cope with difficulties. The reported degree of help given and received in the religious community showed considerable exchange of instrumental and emotional assistance. The findings of perceived community support and reports on help given are consistent with patterns of improved relationships after conversion to the faith of Jehovah's Witnesses and with measures of wellbeing.

Not all in the study population had favorable responses to all measures, which would reflect candidness, diversity in psychological and social characteristics of the sample, and the realities of life's challenges. However, the overall consistency of responses among Jehovah's Witnesses across demographic groups suggests the influence of their common denominator—their shared beliefs and religious identity, as well as congregants' regular group study of these prosocial characteristics from a religious standpoint.

As noted in the previous section, the desire to learn about the Bible and to be closer to God figured in a majority of respondents' reported attraction to the faith. As research has shown, an individual's concept of God as loving and nurturing on one hand, or authoritarian and harsh on the other, can impact overall psychological wellbeing. The image of God as loving and forgiving, coupled with a personal desire to imitate those qualities, can provide strong incentive to overcome the negative emotions and dispositions that would quite normally arise following an intense and traumatic experience, such as genocide.

Overall, respondents viewed their relationships with others as having improved since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses—that is, with family, friends, and neighbors, and with those who had harmed or offended them or whom they had harmed or offended. Statistical correlations between variables showed a positive relationship between prosocial behaviors and perceived changes in personal relationships. The positive association was strongest with trait forgiveness, compassionate love for humanity, and community (congregation) support. Interpersonal relationships are two-way, with multiple influences that contribute to the quality of interactions. However, the JW-RWA findings support previous research that shows the positive effect of prosocial behaviors on both ingroup and outgroup relationships, with dispositional tendencies of forgiveness and compassion resulting in purposeful helping of individuals outside one's immediate social circle.

The study of Jehovah's Witnesses shows how religious tenets of forgiveness and compassionate love for humanity—values extolled almost universally by religions—can be reinforced by a supportive faith community. These values have the potential to facilitate the transformation of attitudes and behaviors that could, in turn, contribute to the stability and wellbeing of families, neighborhoods, and society as a whole.

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CORRIGENDUM

Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family — V. Nkurikiyinka and J. Chu

In Figure 4.3, p. 125 / Section 4, one item was miscategorized. "My actions violated something that is important to me" was listed under "SELF-ACCEPTANCE"; it now appears under "REMORSE." A corrected version of the chart has been updated in the online report. The written analysis and study conclusions are not affected by this correction.

Corrected: April 8, 2026