

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

Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family



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## **Section 7. Conclusion**

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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	<i>Jehovah's Witnesses During and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Psychosocial Factors Related to Faith, Forgiveness, and Family</i>
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
<i>M</i>	Mean
MINUBUMWE	Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement
MRND	Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NOA	None of the above

<i>ns</i>	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
RTL	Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines
SCID-I	Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders
<i>SD</i>	Standard deviation
SDR	Socially Desirable Responses
SFDPS	Self-Forgiveness Dual-Process Scale
T-CRS	Transcultural Community Resilience Scale

## 7. CONCLUSION

The JW-RWA study produced quantitative research findings on faith, forgiveness, and family within the community of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Rwanda. A nationwide online survey conducted in the spring of 2023 resulted in a sample population of 13,590 respondents across all 30 districts in Rwanda—half of the baptized adult Jehovah’s Witnesses in Rwanda aged 18 and over. Bias mitigation included respondent anonymity, objective questions and response options, and use of validated measures for psychosocial variables and socially desirable responses. The research was conducted in consultation with an academic advisory committee of scholars from multidisciplinary fields outside the religious community. By synthesizing data on the historical, religious, and relational experience of respondents, the cross-sectional study renders a portrait of the self-reported demographic, experiential, belief-based, and psychosocial characteristics of the study population.

The study aligns with the call of Rwanda’s National Dialogue Council for religious communities to document their Genocide-era histories (National Dialogue Council, 2015). The study design and survey questionnaire were approved by the Rwanda National Ethics Committee, and the findings were reviewed by the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE).

This research fills a void in the historical record and empirical literature about Jehovah’s Witnesses during the Genocide against the Tutsi, providing insights about individual and collective aspects of the faith community: their faith (motivations, beliefs, and practices); family (functioning, satisfaction, and relationship changes); and forgiveness (prosocial attitudes, social

support, and subjective wellbeing). The large dataset allowed statistical comparisons of Jehovah's Witnesses and non-JWs at the time of the Genocide, along with subgroup analysis by gender, age, and generational cohort.

This concluding section of the report first discusses the circumstances Jehovah's Witnesses experienced before, during, and after the Genocide based on research findings. Then key research findings are presented under the research themes of faith, forgiveness, and family.

### **Before, During, and After the Genocide Against the Tutsi**

Empirical research on the period of the Holocaust has documented the experiences of Jehovah's Witnesses, showing that the Nazi regime targeted and persecuted them for acting in accord with their ethical values (as described in the introduction of this report). The JW-RWA study sought to identify and document the experiences and behaviors of Jehovah's Witnesses half a century later and on a different continent. The Holocaust and the Genocide against the Tutsi differed in duration, intensity, and execution but posed similar moral challenges. In both cases, beliefs and prosocial behaviors adopted prior to genocide were evident in individuals' conscientious helping responses to coercion and genocidal violence. For some who were not targeted for their ethnicity or political position, persecution and even death resulted for strictly adhering to the principles of their faith.

Respondents in the JW-RWA study reported experiences and observations that point to a consistent pattern of nonviolence, impartiality, and political neutrality. Early adopters of the religion in Rwanda faced two critical historical periods for the minority group: the government ban on the religion from 1982 to 1992 and the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

During the 1970s and 1980s, only a few hundred Jehovah's Witness converts were in Rwanda, and only in 1990 did the number of baptized Witnesses reach 1,000. Despite the group's

small, proportionately insignificant number, political forces in the government used legal means to ban them for a decade—from 1982 to 1992. Government pressure on individuals varied, with more serious consequences for males in responsible positions in the congregation. Based on historical records, the decade-long ban resulted in the imprisonment of about one third of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda at the time.

Research findings corroborate the types of government restrictions imposed, with respondents' reports of Witnesses who refused to disavow their religious identity and beliefs. Some were interrogated, arrested, and imprisoned as criminals for their faith. Some were expelled from school, or their children were expelled, for refusal to participate in political acts. During these formative years for the religious community in Rwanda, this ethnically mixed group demonstrated their principled position to remain nonviolent, impartial, and politically neutral despite persecution.

The way Jehovah's Witnesses functioned individually and collectively during the period of the government ban appears to have set a pattern for how they might function during the Genocide. Unlike the period under ban, during the Genocide against the Tutsi, the religious group itself was not targeted by the *génocidaires*, only Witnesses who were Tutsi. What put other Witnesses at risk was their choice to adhere to the group's values of nonviolence and solidarity across ethnic lines. The data findings suggest that mutual trust forged during the ban period was subsequently evident during the greater test to come.

According to records of the national office of Jehovah's Witnesses, an estimated 400 out of approximately 2,500 Jehovah's Witnesses and their associates (family and Bible students) died during the Genocide. The proportion of this number who were Tutsi victims of Genocide is not known. Also unknown is the number of targeted Jehovah's Witnesses who survived the Genocide

with the help of those within their faith community who apparently were willing to cross ethnic lines to save fellow Witnesses. (For examples, see Seminega, 2019; Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 2012.)

According to all historical indications, rescue helping behavior during genocide is a rarity among the general population (Fujii, 2014). During this critical time in Rwandan history, trust of friends and neighbors was broken as hateful rhetoric and sweeping massacres negated religious ties and moral prohibitions against harm and murder. Individual rescuers of those targeted during the Genocide against the Tutsi often acted without the support of their religious leaders or faith community, which research has consistently shown was closely tied to the leaderships' political connections. By contrast, the Witnesses' apolitical and inclusive doctrine underpinned their collective rejection of ethnopolitical divisions, as demonstrated first during the period of government ban and subsequently during the Genocide.

The research findings provide insights into the extent and nature of help that those targeted received during the Genocide. Of the 3,620 Genocide Generation Adults who provided data on their role-situations during the Genocide, 15% were baptized Jehovah's Witnesses in or before 1994 and 85% were non-JWs who adopted the religion after 1994. Based on these survey results, respondents who were already Jehovah's Witnesses in 1994 had a higher proportion who were targeted to be killed (Tutsi) than non-JWs at the time (23% compared with 13%).

Respondents who had been targeted to be killed reported the extent and nature of help they received during the Genocide. These findings provide insights into interethnic relationships among Jehovah's Witnesses—those targeted and their helpers. Notable differences in help received were found between those targeted who were non-JWs in 1994 and targeted Jehovah's Witnesses in 1994.

For example, the data revealed that the religious classifications of those who helped were disproportionate to the religious distribution of the general population in Rwanda at the time of the Genocide. Jehovah's Witnesses comprised only 0.03% of the population, yet 20% of targeted non-JWs and 80% of targeted Jehovah's Witnesses reported receiving help from Witnesses or their associates. This proportion is notable, given that rescue behavior is extremely uncommon in genocidal contexts. By comparison, although Catholics represented approximately 60% of the population in 1994, 31% of targeted non-JWs and 16% of targeted Jehovah's Witnesses reported receiving help from Catholics.

Additionally, among all those targeted and in danger for 1 month or more, most reported receiving the same or fewer types of help compared with those who were in danger for shorter periods. In contrast, for targeted Jehovah's Witnesses, those who were in danger for 1 month or more reported receiving more types of help than other JW's who were in danger for shorter periods. Compared with targeted non-JWs, a higher percentage of targeted Jehovah's Witnesses not only received help but were also more likely to receive help coordinated with others, help from more than 15 persons, and help that could have resulted in their helper(s) being killed. Considering the complex factors involved in successful coordinated rescue, these findings suggest the existence of a preexisting social network that facilitated individual or collective help for targeted Jehovah's Witnesses. These insights into group-level helping contribute to the scant evidence in research literature to date.

As corroborating evidence of the nonviolent and politically neutral position of Jehovah's Witnesses, 776 respondents who belonged to other religions at the time of the Genocide reported, *I saw Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to participate in the Genocide*. Such firsthand observations of Jehovah's Witnesses' nonviolence apparently influenced many of the 776 respondents to later

become Jehovah's Witnesses. One third of this group indicated that one of the main reasons they were originally attracted to the religion was the faith group's position of nonviolence.

Following the Genocide, the faith community grew rapidly. The research data confirmed the organization's own records of an almost 100% increase from 1994 to 1996 and an increase of over 200% from 1994 to 1999. (See results about growth over time reported in Section 3, Faith.) The growth of adult converts was steady over the next 2 decades until the year 2020 when meetings and the ministry were curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 90% of the total sample were first-generation Witnesses. Comparable to the demographic composition of religions in Rwanda, half of Jehovah's Witnesses had parents who were Catholic and smaller percentages had parents with other religious backgrounds (i.e., Anglican, Pentecostal, Seventh-day Adventist, Muslim, Animist, Baptist, and other smaller denominations).

### **Faith—Motivations and Beliefs**

The study provided research-based evidence of Jehovah's Witnesses' religious motivations, beliefs, identity, and coping.

Given the historical context of post-Genocide Rwanda, it is understandable that some JW converts were attracted to the religion originally because of the Witnesses' position of nonviolence (20%), a desire for clear moral guidelines (16%), and wanting to make better life choices (13%). For most respondents, however, the main motivation to adopt a new religion related to religious teachings. The decision to adopt the religion was driven by cognitive, not emotional, processes, with most studying the Bible for over 1 year before becoming baptized Jehovah's Witnesses. This result is supported by the largely intrinsic religious orientation observed among respondents (see below).

What originally attracted most Rwandan Witnesses to the religion was the logic of the main teachings (49%) and wanting to learn more about the Bible (45%). Although these are also reasons Jehovah's Witnesses report that they remained in the religion, the leading motivations to remain in the faith were to be closer to God and to have a hope for the future. The emphasis placed on a relationship with God combined with a hope for the future may plausibly be associated with behaviors in their everyday life, including their relational conduct within the family and congregation and with those outside the faith community.

These findings were corroborated by a measure that assessed intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity—that is, a deeply internalized religious belief guiding one's life compared with faith used for social and personal benefits. The majority of Jehovah's Witnesses have a predominantly intrinsic religious orientation, with nearly 95% indicating that their religious beliefs influence every aspect of their life. According to the findings, they *enjoy learning about [their] religion* and have a *sense of God's presence*. Their religion *answers many questions about the meaning of life*. They desire to *live all [their] life by [their] religious beliefs*, and *[their] whole approach to life is based on [their] religion*.

Religions offer different doctrinal and philosophical explanations about the nature of a divine being, the value of sacred texts, the reason for suffering, and what the future holds. Opinions can vary widely even within religious groups. However, Jehovah's Witnesses are in almost unanimous agreement with core beliefs that could shape their thinking and decisions. For example, they believe the Bible is inspired by God (thus, is viewed as a reliable guide for daily living). They believe Jehovah God created the first couple who became the parents of all humans (which negates ethnic divisions). Mankind is living in the "last days" (so current difficult conditions will soon end). Those who have died do not suffer in eternal hellfire (which removes morbid fear of a

vengeful God). God promises to resurrect the righteous and unrighteous (which provides comfort for those grieving the loss of loved ones). God's Kingdom government will end all human problems on earth (which is a main message that the Witnesses share in their ministry). And finally, as reflected in the survey responses, Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda believe that Jesus taught his disciples not to be involved in political affairs (which explains why they respect governmental authorities but remain politically neutral).

According to the research findings, Rwandans who became Jehovah's Witnesses view these teachings as logical and motivational. With near unanimity, respondents identify with their chosen religious community, are glad to be Jehovah's Witnesses, feel committed to the religion, and think the religion is an important part of how they see themselves.

The Genocide against the Tutsi affected how individuals view the world, their family's story, and their own lives. Almost 15% of respondents think about the Genocide *frequently* or *persistently*, while just over half report that they think about the Genocide *rarely* or *never*. The differences in experiences are most evident between those who experienced the Genocide as adults and those born after the Genocide.

The research indicates that religious beliefs and religious coping may help Witnesses cognitively process past traumas and provide them hope for the future. Over 90% viewed their congregation as a source of comfort and support in times of trouble. Almost 45% of respondents reported that having a hope for the future was one of the top three reasons they remained Jehovah's Witnesses. Based on results from the measure of posttraumatic growth (PTG), Jehovah's Witnesses commonly reframe negative thoughts and interpretations about traumatic experiences as more positive ones, especially in terms of spiritual growth and improved relationships with others. After experiencing traumatic events, survey respondents identified positive changes in their

understanding of themselves and the world. This was a dominant characteristic of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda, whose PTG scores were consistent regardless of gender, age group, generation, Genocide role-situation, years baptized, or interruption in their religious affiliation.

The study inquired which scriptures the Witnesses used to cope with thoughts of the Genocide. Again, some variations existed, but the responses were largely consistent. Out of eight scriptures, the top two scriptures for coping with thoughts of the Genocide, chosen by half of respondents, were as follows: *Return evil to no one. Vengeance belongs to God* (Romans 12:17, 19); and *Death, pain, and sorrow will be no more* (Revelation 21:4). The third leading choice of approximately 40% was *The wicked will be no more* (Psalm 37:10). *Love your enemy* (Matthew 5:44) was chosen by almost 30% of the Witnesses. Together, these scriptures reflect core beliefs in divine justice, the hope of resurrection, the restoration of a cleansed earth without wickedness, and the need for self-restraint and genuine love for others. These beliefs could provide a cognitive rationale for the Witnesses' response to adversity before, during, and after the Genocide, no matter their personal Genocide role-situation.

### **Forgiveness, Prosocial Behavior, and Social Support**

Forgiveness is generally recognized as central to the process of reconciliation in strained relationships and in post-conflict societies. The complexity of forgiveness was evidenced from the results of measures of trait forgiveness, divine forgiveness, and self-forgiveness. Trait forgiveness—the self-appraised disposition to forgive interpersonal transgressions—had the most consistent and positive pattern among Jehovah's Witnesses across gender, age group, and generation. Overall, they view themselves as forgiving, not harboring grudges, and not retaliating. Jehovah's Witnesses are in almost complete agreement that God forgives those who are truly repentant; still, some believe that their sins were too serious for God to forgive. The vast majority

indicated they had taken responsibility for their action(s). Half had expressed remorse, and over half found it difficult to accept and love self in the context of doing wrong. The forgiveness measures in the survey were not Genocide-specific but presented a general assessment. Additional analysis and research are needed to understand how Jehovah's Witnesses understand and apply the three types of forgiveness to themselves and others.

The findings show that religious tenets of forgiveness and compassionate love for humanity—values extolled by most religions—characterize the faith community of Jehovah's Witnesses. As would be expected in a religious community in which love for others is considered a foundational principle, it was not surprising that compassionate love for humanity, such as having *tender feelings toward people*, was viewed as a consistent and positive characteristic.

Survey respondents reported that their congregations serve as a source of emotional and social support. Over half of Jehovah's Witnesses indicated that they make friends and spend time with friends at their religious meetings. On a measure of community resilience, some 90% of Jehovah's Witnesses favorably rated the degree of congregation support they experienced. They viewed the congregation as a source of support during difficult times. They felt *attached to [the] congregation and to its values* and thought they could *count on* their congregation if anything happened. The overwhelming majority perceived that their congregation *enables its different members to build strong bonds* and helps individuals *cope with problems*. This assessment of their congregation life was consistent regardless of gender, age group, generation, or years as Jehovah's Witnesses.

Jehovah's Witnesses report that they receive emotional and spiritual support, material and financial support, and instrumental support (e.g., cleaning, shopping) from those in their congregation. However, despite the level of support offered by fellow congregants, such extrinsic

factors are not a main motivation for individuals to be Jehovah's Witnesses. Less than 1% indicated they remained in the religion to receive material support.

In post-Genocide Rwanda, the challenge for all social groups is in creating an environment that assimilates those from different backgrounds and experiences, such as those who were targeted and those who were later imprisoned. Over 95% of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda reported that their congregation *makes efforts to integrate all its members and to make them stronger*. Evidence of this could be seen in the degree of giving and receiving within the congregation. Perhaps the strongest evidence of forgiveness, impartiality, and integration within the congregations is from the viewpoint of those who were imprisoned for genocide crimes and later became Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as the eight respondents who were baptized Witnesses in 1994 and indicated that they were imprisoned for participating in the Genocide.

The survey asked if relationships with those who had hurt them or whom they had hurt were better or worse since they became Jehovah's Witnesses. Approximately 80% of the sample population felt that their relationships in conflict situations were better. The perceived improvements could not be attributed directly to aspects of the religion; whatever the factors, the findings provide a subjective assessment of interpersonal relationships that would likely require a degree of prosociality to accomplish the significant improvements in what would have previously been strained relationships.

Since the Genocide against the Tutsi, the Rwandan government has instituted numerous programs to accomplish the goals of rehabilitation, reconciliation, and restoration of those who were imprisoned for genocide crimes. Thousands of inmates or former inmates have demonstrated personal changes, expressed remorse, and asked for forgiveness in order to return to community life. Religious organizations are in a position to contribute to these efforts by framing reconciliation

and restoration in spiritual terms but with real-world application in daily life. In particular, the tradition of mutual support within the Witness community provides the opportunity for those who were imprisoned for genocide acts and their family members to be fully integrated as contributors to cohesive congregation life. Several variables provide evidence of this dynamic among the distinct subgroup in the sample who self-identified as having been imprisoned for genocide crimes and who later became Jehovah's Witnesses.

Of all the subgroups analyzed (i.e., gender, age group, generation, distinct Genocide role-situation), those who were imprisoned thought more frequently about the Genocide. They were the most negative about their childhood and past but the most positive about their near future and distant future. They reported the most posttraumatic growth and had the highest (most positive) hope score of all groups. They reported similar satisfaction with their family life compared with other groups.

Those who were imprisoned had the highest percentage (87%) to strongly favor young people learning about the Genocide—over 20% more than those who had been targeted during the Genocide (65%). These individuals, who were imprisoned for complicity in ethnically motivated violence, have affiliated with a religion that practices nonviolence and impartiality; and they now believe that teaching about the Genocide was *very* or *extremely important*. Over three fourths of those who were imprisoned had talked with their family specifically about their personal Genocide experiences, and over half had talked with those in their congregation. The congregation could offer fellow believers an environment to demonstrate genuine remorse, change, and self-forgiveness, along with opportunities to express the changes they had personally made and that were consistent with the teachings of their new faith.

The benefits of prosocial behaviors and the religious beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses may contribute to their subjective wellbeing. Although the data cannot demonstrate direct causation and many factors may be at work, over 90% perceived positive psychosocial changes since becoming Jehovah's Witnesses in connection with their self-worth, self-opinion, hope for the future, life in general, and emotional and mental wellbeing.

### **Family Life**

The study provided insights into the family life of Jehovah's Witnesses. Overall, Jehovah's Witnesses are satisfied with the closeness, communication, and ability to resolve conflicts in their family. No significant differences in family satisfaction were found based on gender, generation, or Genocide role-situation, as might have been expected in a general population study. The subjective assessment of family satisfaction did not vary significantly between the Genocide Generation and Post-Genocide Generation, or across the role-situations they or their family experienced during the Genocide.

Although religious differences in marriages and families can lead to a higher degree of conflict, respondents gave a predominantly positive, not negative, rating of family relations after their conversion to the faith. Overall, almost 90% of Witnesses in Rwanda believed that their relationships with family were better since they became Jehovah's Witnesses, with 60% reporting that their family relationships were *significantly better*. The number of years a person was one of Jehovah's Witnesses was positively associated with perceived relationship improvements and satisfaction with the cohesion, flexibility, and communication in their families. The perceived improvement in relationships over time would likely reflect positive changes in attitudes and behaviors of both Witnesses and their non-Witness family members. Further analysis is needed to test the extent and ways in which religion has a moderating effect on Witnesses' family life.

In the last 2 decades, an increasing number of those being baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda are second-generation JWs who had at least one JW parent at birth. However, almost 90% of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda are first-generation and a little over 10% are second-generation Witnesses. For less than 20% of the total sample, having family members who were Jehovah's Witnesses attracted them to the religion originally; however, less than 5% indicated that having JW relatives was a main reason for them to remain in the religion. Second-generation JWs are more likely to have other JW family members, half of whom have JW fathers and about three fourths of whom have JW mothers. About one tenth have JW grandmothers, and over half have JW siblings.

As might be expected of family members who share the same faith, family satisfaction was significantly more favorable if all adult members were Jehovah's Witnesses. Similarly, married respondents with JW spouses reported higher family satisfaction than those with non-JW spouses. However, whether parents and adult children shared the same Witness faith did not significantly affect their family satisfaction. That is, family satisfaction was similar for first- and second-generation JWs, for Witness parents with JW or non-JW adult children, and for Witness adult children with JW or non-JW parents.

Although statistical differences were not found in family satisfaction based on age, gender, generation, religious profile, or Genocide role-situations, the findings did identify other factors that do significantly influence family satisfaction. Those who were married were more satisfied with their family life than those who were never married or who were separated, divorced, or widowed. Those who were married without children had the highest family satisfaction. Family satisfaction was lowest for those who lived alone and those who were in orphaned, child-headed households. Larger household size was associated with lower family satisfaction. Poor health also

negatively affected family satisfaction. In other words, such factors as marital status, household composition, and health status were more likely to negatively influence family satisfaction than were age, religious profile, Genocide experience, and other variables.

The family unit can provide a supportive and safe environment for conversations that increase mutual understanding and strengthen family bonds. That individuals confide in their family can reflect a degree of trust and openness in those relationships. Regardless of gender, age group, generation, or Genocide role-situation, over 80% of Jehovah's Witnesses reported that they were comfortable talking with their family about traumatic experiences. Conversations about Genocide experiences occurred more often with those most closely related and likely in closer proximity, that is, immediate family (spouse, children, parents, siblings), and less often with extended family (grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins). Two thirds of respondents who were adults in Rwanda during the Genocide had talked with their immediate family members about their personal Genocide experiences.

The study found a general awareness of certain boundaries in conversations about difficult topics. Over 85% of the total sample thought that people should respect the wishes of those who do not want to talk about past traumas. Over 75% showed a generational openness to conversations between younger and older ones in their families, despite over half indicating that it was *painful to hear about [their] family's Genocide experiences*. Although receptive to dialogue about trauma or Genocide experiences, almost 40% indicated concern over burdening children with the traumas of others, and 30% thought that talking about traumas could do *more harm than good*. The Post-Genocide Generation, those born after 1994, not having personally experienced the Genocide, were less likely to have conversations based on their family's Genocide experiences. Over 85% of the total sample agreed that young ones can learn from their family's experiences—good and bad.

About half of Jehovah's Witnesses had family discussions about *moral lessons learned from the Genocide against the Tutsi*. In comparison, about 60% of those who were targeted to be killed during the Genocide and 75% of those who were imprisoned during the Genocide had discussed moral lessons learned from the Genocide with their family.

The complexities of family dynamics are compounded by individual experiences, religious conversions, generational perspectives, and post-Genocide environment. Overall, the research found that Jehovah's Witnesses in post-Genocide Rwanda view their families as successful in their flexibility, communication, and cohesiveness as they navigate life challenges.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

The study has limitations typical of survey research. The cross-sectional design of this study cannot establish causal links. All self-reported data are susceptible to social desirability bias. While long-term retrospective recall may generally degrade memory, emotionally intense events may enhance memory. Respondents may retroactively use religious interpretive frameworks to process life events. Quantitative survey research based on individual self-reports cannot capture the complex and dynamic functioning of congregations and families. The findings can only be applied to the sample population of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda and cannot be generalized to the larger population.

The JW-RWA study contributes to the empirical literature, providing research-based evidence of Jehovah's Witnesses' historical record of nonviolence and political neutrality before and during the Genocide against the Tutsi, consistent with their position during the Holocaust. The quantitative study gives a composite profile of the faith community—particularly how beliefs may influence self-identities, overall outlook, social interactions, family life, and psychological wellbeing.

More quantitative and qualitative research is needed. For example, future research could investigate family systems, congregational networks, and subjective wellbeing with other religious and nonreligious populations in Rwanda. In-depth interviews could explore the lived experiences of individual Witnesses from diverse backgrounds and varied circumstances. Other scholarly investigations would benefit from samples that include Jehovah's Witnesses along with other religious groups.

The study indicates that overall, Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda report progress in post-Genocide healing. Open communication within families and shared experiences among fellow congregants may help individuals learn from the past and at the same time look toward the future with hope and optimism. Finally, the study identifies some of the struggles, motivations, and dominant characteristics of those in the faith community who, alongside their neighbors, pursue reconciliation and unity in post-Genocide Rwanda.

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