

International Research on Confirmation: “Confirmands in Norway”
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Confirmation in Norway

Relations

As in the other Nordic countries, the day of confirmation in Norway, is a very social event, both for the family and for the confirmands themselves. The training for confirmation is also seen as special. As we know, social interaction establishes different kinds of relations. The Norwegian confirmands’ view their confirmation training as a chance to build a network, to enjoy the company of friends and share common experiences.

I find that the Norwegian confirmands are *relation orientated*. One important social value is to form friendships. The Norwegian confirmands have a strong interest in being together with their friends, developing new relations with people of the same age, continuing friendships established during the confirmation training and generally building on friendship.

Relations are very important as a motivator for attending the confirmation classes. For the youth, experiencing a sense of community in the confirmation group, and meeting and getting to know friends are important motivation factors for signing up for confirmation classes.

Motivation factors for becoming a confirmand student

On a seven-point scale from “not applicable at all” to “totally applicable”

Mean

to have a beautiful celebration with family and friends on the day of confirmation	4.74
to experience a sense of community in the confirmation group	4.49
to get money or presents at the end	4.45
to meet and get to know friends	4.12
to take an important step in growing-up	3.90
to come to my own decision about my faith	3.87
to receive a blessing on the day of confirmation	3.79
to learn more about God and faith	3.50
to think about what is good or bad for me and my life	3.46
to be strengthened in my faith	3.32
to talk about life after death	3.02
to become more familiar with what the Bible says	2.88
to learn to pray	2.56
to learn more about other religions	2.43

When we asked the confirmands about what kind of interest they have in various topics in the confirmation training they pointed to issues which we can define as *relation related*.

Friendship, fairness and responsibility for others are among the most interesting topics in the training.

Interest in these topics

On a seven-point scale from “not interested” to “very interested” Mean

Friendship	5.98
The meaning of life	4.82
Fairness and responsibility for others	4.72
Christian holidays (Christmas, Easter, Whitsun etc.)	4.63
Baptism	4.03
Violence and crime	3.82
Ecology	3.76
Your own parish	3.61
Jesus Christ	3.59
The church as a building	3.45
The Holly Spirit	3.45
The Bible	3.29
The Lord’s Supper	3.28
The Ten Commandments	3.11
Course and meaning of Sunday services	3.11
Body and sexuality	3.00
Other religions	2.98
Spiritual phenomena such as healing, magic, spiritism	2.69
Church communities	2.69

Expectations for what they can get out of the confirmation training are influenced by the confirmands’ relation orientation. Being social with their friends gives them the opportunity to cultivate their relations. When we asked them what they think will be important for them during their confirmation training, among the most important factors are: To have a lot of activities and to go on day trips or attend camps.

Expectations

On a seven-point scale from “not applicable at all” to “totally applicable” Mean

to take part in confirmation training without too much stress	4.93
to go on day trips or attend camps	4.92
to increase and strengthen my self-esteem/self-knowledge	4.60
to attend the group meetings of the confirmation training regularly	4.48
to have a lot of activities	4.20
to find my own point of view concerning my own life	3.96
to have my questions concerning faith addressed	3.84
to attend the services of the confirmation training regularly	3.68
to experience the presence of God	3.65
to sing or play music together	3.64
to learn how to take responsibility for myself	3.62
to be allowed to decide about the topics together with my fellow confirmands	3.55
to learn key Christian texts by heart (e.g. the Creed)	3.14
to have personal contact with the leaders and counsellors	3.04

Independency

Even though the Norwegian confirmands are very concerned about relations, they are also concerned about being independent and self-confident – to know who there are, what they

believe and what they think. This independency and self-awareness of their identity corresponds to their expectations for their confirmation classes. Important expectations for signing up for confirmation classes are to increase and strengthen their self-esteem/self-knowledge and to find out what their own point of view is about their life.

Expectations

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to be allowed to decide the topics together with my fellow confirmands	3.55
to learn central Christian texts by heart (e.g. the Creed)	3.14
to have personal contact with the leaders and counsellors	3.04

Traditionalism

“What’s bred in the bone will come out in the flesh!” The Norwegian adults affiliated with the Lutheran Church are very traditional, and so are their youth. Infant baptism and good old traditions are the main arguments for being a part of a confirmation class. The young people give exactly the same reason for choosing confirmation as the adults give for being affiliated with the church and having their children baptised. It is interesting to see that the confirmands’ friends do not have the same influence on their choice as do tradition and the guidance from their infant baptism 15 years earlier.

Motivation factors

On a seven-point scale from “not applicable at all” to “totally applicable”

Mean

because I was baptised when I was a child	4.89
because it is a good old tradition	4.49
because I see myself as a Christian	3.53
because my parents wanted me to do so	3.40
because I felt obliged to take part	3.10
because my friends did so as well	2.92
because I was invited personally (e.g. by a letter)	2.73
because I had been told that confirmation training is fun	2.71
because my grandparents wanted me to do so	2.64

We can see the same tendency concerning the topics they find interesting in the confirmation training. The confirmands are interested in learning about the Christian holidays and the church ritual baptism. These are traditionally events which gather most people in the church. I find that the interest in these topics indicates that the confirmands have a traditional approach to the church.

Interest in these topics

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Justice and responsibility for others	4.72
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Baptism	4.03
Violence and crime	3.82
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Your own parish	3.61
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Let me summarise before time runs out. The general tendency among confirmands in Norway is to be relation orientated, traditional but at same time independent. Thank you, very much for your attention, it is not possible to say more on this topic in the allotted five minutes.

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This study is about what Norwegian youths have to say about what confirmation is to them and what it should be. But like the youth problem “debate”, this study is about much more. It is about how one particular group in Norwegian society focuses on confirmation as a way to make sense of larger social changes and their ideals for their adolescence.