

INTERNALIZATION OF AHLUS SUNNAH WAL JAMAAH VALUES IN SHAPING RELIGIOUS AND MODERATE CHARACTER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the internalization of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah values in shaping religious and moderate character in early childhood. Aswaja values are highly relevant to early childhood education because they emphasize tawassuth moderation, tawazun balance, i'tidal justice, tasamuh tolerance, exemplary behavior, peace-loving attitudes, and respect for polite Islamic traditions. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects included the head of the early childhood education institution, teachers, children, and parents. The findings show that the internalization of Aswaja values is carried out through worship habituation, teacher role modeling, Islamic storytelling, educational play, introduction to religious traditions, daily prayers, shalawat, and simple social practices such as sharing, respecting others, apologizing, and working together. Religious character is formed through the habit of praying, recognizing Allah, loving the Prophet, respecting teachers and parents, and practicing daily Islamic manners. Meanwhile, moderate character is reflected in children's behavior, such as respecting friends, not imposing their will, taking turns, accepting differences, and resolving conflicts peacefully. This study concludes that Aswaja education for early childhood should not be delivered as an abstract doctrine, but rather through habituation, concrete experiences, games, songs, stories, and a child-friendly religious environment.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the main foundation for shaping children's personality, character, and religious orientation. At this stage, children are in a sensitive period of development, in which they are easily influenced by their environment, role models, habituation, and direct experiences. Values introduced from an early age greatly influence how children think, behave, and interact with others in later stages of life. Therefore, early childhood education should not only focus on cognitive, language, motor, and socio-emotional development, but also on the formation of religious and moderate character (Zuhriyah et al., 2026).

In the context of Islamic education, religious character should not merely be understood as children's ability to memorize prayers, short Qur'anic chapters, or simple worship practices. Religious character also includes children's ability to recognize goodness, practice manners, love Allah and His Messenger, respect parents and teachers, and behave politely in daily life. Good religious character can be seen in simple behaviors, such as greeting others, praying before and after activities, speaking honestly, sharing with friends, apologizing, forgiving, and maintaining cleanliness (Efendi et al., 2026).

In addition to religious character, early childhood education also needs to cultivate moderate character. Moderation in early childhood does not mean burdening children with complex religious concepts. Rather, it means guiding children to develop balanced attitudes, self-control, respect for friends, willingness to take turns, acceptance of differences, and peaceful interaction. These values are important because children live in diverse social environments, including differences in family background, ability, habits, and personal character (Sofa & Qomariah, 2026).

Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah, commonly known as Aswaja, contains basic values that are relevant to early childhood character education. Values such as **tawassuth** or moderation, **tawazun** or balance, **i'tidal** or justice, and **tasamuh** or tolerance can serve as a foundation for shaping children who are religious, polite, peaceful, and moderate. Aswaja should not only be understood as a theological doctrine, but also as a way of thinking and behaving in social and religious life. In educational practice, Aswaja values can be translated into moral habituation, religious culture, respect for teachers, love for scholars, love for the homeland, appreciation of Islamic traditions, and peaceful social interaction (Bukhori et al., 2026).

Aswaja education for early childhood requires an approach that suits children's developmental characteristics. Young children are not yet ready to receive abstract doctrinal explanations. They understand values more easily through concrete examples, repetition, songs, stories, games, symbols, movement, and habituation. Therefore, the internalization of Aswaja values must be presented in a joyful, child-friendly, contextual, and non-intimidating way. Teachers play an important role as role models, facilitators, and guides who present Aswaja values through daily behaviour (Qumariyah et al., 2026).

Based on this background, this article discusses the internalization of Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah values in shaping religious and moderate character in early childhood. The focus of this study is directed toward identifying Aswaja values relevant to early childhood, strategies for internalizing these values in learning activities, and their contribution to the formation of religious and moderate character (Laili et al., 2026).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah, commonly known as Aswaja, is a value system in Islamic education that emphasizes moderate, balanced, just, and tolerant religious attitudes. The main principles of Aswaja include **tawassuth** or moderation, **tawazun** or balance, **i'tidal** or justice, and **tasamuh** or tolerance. These values are relevant to early childhood education because children need to be introduced to Islam through gentle, peaceful, and child-friendly approaches (Khoiroh & Sofa, 2026).

Early childhood is an important phase for character formation. At this stage, children learn values through imitation, habituation, stories, songs, play, and direct experience. Therefore, Aswaja values should not be taught as abstract doctrines, but

should be internalized through daily activities such as praying together, greeting others, reciting shalawat, sharing toys, taking turns, respecting teachers, and helping friends (Hawa & Sofa, 2026).

The value of tawassuth teaches children to avoid selfish behavior and to act calmly. In classroom activities, this value can be introduced by guiding children not to force their wishes and to play peacefully with others. Tawazun teaches balance between worship, learning, playing, and social interaction. This value supports holistic development because children are guided not only to memorize religious materials but also to develop emotional, social, and moral abilities (Islam et al., 2026).

Furthermore, i'tidal introduces fairness in simple forms, such as queuing, sharing, and giving friends equal opportunities. Meanwhile, tasamuh teaches children to accept differences, avoid mocking friends, and respect others. These values are important in building moderate character from an early age (Aziz et al., 2026).

Religious character in early childhood can be seen through simple behaviors such as praying before activities, saying salam, respecting parents and teachers, loving the Prophet Muhammad, and practicing good manners. Meanwhile, moderate character appears when children are able to share, wait for their turn, accept friends' differences, apologize, forgive, and resolve conflicts peacefully (Sholihah et al., 2026).

Teachers play a central role in the internalization of Aswaja values. Children tend to imitate what teachers do more than what teachers say. Therefore, teachers must become role models by showing patience, politeness, fairness, compassion, and respect. In addition, parental involvement is also important so that religious and moderate values taught at school can be continued at home (Aditama et al., 2026).

Based on the literature, Aswaja-based early childhood education is an effective approach to shape children's religious and moderate character. Through habituation, role modeling, storytelling, songs, play, and a supportive environment, Aswaja values can become part of children's daily behavior. Thus, Aswaja education contributes to preparing young generations who are religious, polite, tolerant, balanced, and peace-loving (Asia & Sofa, 2026).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because the research aims to understand the process of internalizing Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah values in the context of early childhood education naturally, deeply, and contextually. Qualitative research enables the researcher to explore learning practices, habituation, teacher role modeling, institutional culture, and children's behavior related to the formation of religious and moderate character (Husnia & Sofa, 2026).

This research is a field study with a descriptive design. The study is directed at systematically describing how Aswaja values are introduced, habituated, and instilled in early childhood through learning activities and the culture of early childhood education institutions. The research subjects consist of the head of the institution, classroom teachers, children, and parents. Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement in the educational process and character formation of children (Maula & Sofa, 2026).

Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly examine learning activities, worship habituation, teacher-child interactions, and children's social behavior in the school environment. Interviews were conducted with the head of the institution, teachers, and parents to obtain information about strategies, obstacles, and the impact of Aswaja value internalization. Documentation was used to review lesson plans, daily activity schedules, photos of activities, communication books, and religious programs implemented by the institution (Mh et al., 2026).

Data analysis was carried out through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting data relevant to the research focus, namely Aswaja values, internalization strategies, religious character, and moderate character in early childhood. Data display was presented in the form of descriptive narratives. Conclusion drawing was conducted by identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings from the collected data. Data validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation by comparing the results of observation, interviews, and documentation (Putri et al., 2026).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah Values Relevant to Early Childhood

Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah values cover broad aspects, including theology, Islamic law, morality, and social life. However, in the context of early childhood education, these values need to be simplified according to children's developmental level. Young children are not directed to understand Aswaja conceptually or theoretically, but are guided to recognize its basic values through concrete behavior.

The first value is *tawassuth*, which means moderation, balance, and avoiding extremism. In early childhood, *tawassuth* can be introduced through the habituation of calm behavior, emotional control, willingness to listen to teachers, and not wanting to win alone. Children are guided to understand that every friend has the same opportunity to play, speak, and use learning materials.

The second value is *tawazun*, which means balance. In early childhood learning, *tawazun* can be applied through a balanced arrangement of learning, playing, worshiping, moving, and resting. Children are not only directed to become cognitively smart, but also to develop morality, independence, care, and social skills. Teachers can instill this value by arranging daily activities that balance spiritual, motoric, artistic, language, and social development.

The third value is *i'tidal*, which means justice and proportionality. In early childhood, this value can be introduced through the habit of sharing, queuing, taking turns, not grabbing toys, and respecting the rights of others. Children learn that justice is not merely about receiving the same thing, but also about understanding that everyone has their own needs and turn.

The fourth value is *tasamuh*, which means tolerance and respect for differences. In early childhood, *tasamuh* can be instilled by encouraging children to befriend everyone, not mock others, accept differences in ability, and help friends who face difficulties. Children also need to be guided not to laugh at friends who cannot yet read, have not memorized prayers, or have different habits.

The fifth value is mahabbah, or love and compassion. This value is very important in early childhood education because children need a safe, warm, and loving environment. Aswaja education should not be presented through verbal violence, pressure, or fear, but through affection, gentleness, and role modeling.

The sixth value is love for polite Islamic traditions, such as reciting shalawat, simple tahlil, daily prayers, educational visits to religious places, commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, and religious activities appropriate to children's world. These traditions can become media for character education when presented in a joyful and meaningful way.

2. Strategies for Internalizing Aswaja Values in Early Childhood Learning

The internalization of Aswaja values in early childhood is carried out through practical strategies integrated into daily activities. The most important strategy is habituation. Young children learn through repetition. Religious and moderate values are more easily internalized when practiced consistently in daily routines, such as greeting others, praying before learning, praying before eating, queuing, tidying up toys, and saying thank you.

The second strategy is teacher role modeling. Early childhood teachers are highly influential figures for children. Children more easily imitate teachers' behavior than understand long verbal advice. When teachers are gentle, patient, fair, and polite, children learn to imitate those attitudes. Teacher role modeling becomes the main medium for instilling tawassuth, tasamuh, and i'tidal values.

The third strategy is Islamic storytelling. Stories about Prophet Muhammad, his companions, scholars, pious people, and moral examples can be used to introduce Aswaja values. Through stories, children can understand goodness imaginatively and emotionally. For example, teachers may tell stories about the Prophet's love for children, his forgiveness, honesty, patience, and kindness to everyone. These stories are then connected to children's daily lives, such as not mocking friends, sharing food, and apologizing when making mistakes.

The fourth strategy is songs and shalawat. Young children are very close to rhythm, movement, and singing. Aswaja values can be introduced through simple songs about loving Allah, loving the Prophet, respecting parents, loving friends, and living peacefully. Shalawat can also become a medium for strengthening children's spiritual and emotional development. Through shalawat, children are introduced to love for Prophet Muhammad in a joyful way.

The fifth strategy is educational play. Play is the world of children. Therefore, Aswaja values need to be integrated into play activities, not merely delivered through lectures. For example, turn-taking games can teach justice, group games can teach cooperation, role-playing can teach responsibility, and arranging pictures of worship activities can introduce religious values.

The sixth strategy is institutional religious culture. A religious, friendly, and moderate school environment greatly influences children's character formation. Religious culture can be built through morning greetings, collective prayers, simple dhuha prayer habituation, recitation of short Qur'anic chapters, Friday charity, Islamic holiday celebrations, and sharing activities. This culture becomes a real space for children to experience Aswaja values directly.

The seventh strategy is collaboration with parents. The internalization of Aswaja values will not be optimal if it is only carried out at school. Parents need to be involved so that habituation at school continues at home. Teachers can provide parents with information about daily prayers, eating manners, speaking manners, greeting habits, and social behaviors that need to be strengthened at home.

3. Formation of Religious Character in Early Childhood through Aswaja Values

Religious character in early childhood is formed through gradual habituation. In the context of Aswaja, religious character is not only seen from children's ability to participate in worship activities, but also from their moral behavior in daily life. A religious child is a child who begins to recognize Allah, love the Prophet, respect parents and teachers, and show good behavior toward friends.

Prayer habituation is one of the main forms of religious character formation. Children are guided to recite prayers before and after learning, before eating, after eating, before entering and after leaving the bathroom, and prayers for parents. Through this habituation, children learn that every activity should begin by remembering Allah. Although children may not fully understand the meaning of prayers deeply, this habit becomes an important spiritual foundation.

In addition to prayers, greeting others is also part of religious character. Children are taught to say salam when arriving at school, meeting teachers, entering the classroom, and going home. Salam is not merely a verbal expression, but also contains the values of peace, respect, and compassion. From the Aswaja perspective, salam reflects Islam as a friendly religion that spreads peace and safety.

Religious character is also formed through the introduction of love for Prophet Muhammad. Children are introduced to the Prophet as a role model who was loving, honest, patient, and kind to everyone. This introduction can be carried out through stories, shalawat, educational pictures, and the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday. Thus, love for the Prophet does not remain merely memorized knowledge, but is also embedded in daily behavior.

Manners toward teachers and parents are also important indicators of religious character. Children are guided to listen to teachers, speak politely, kiss teachers' hands, ask permission, and say thank you. This habituation is in line with Aswaja values that emphasize respect for knowledge, teachers, scholars, and parents. Respect is not taught through pressure, but through gentle role modeling and consistent habituation.

4. Formation of Moderate Character in Early Childhood through Aswaja Values

Moderate character in early childhood is formed through repeated social experiences. Children learn to become moderate when they are accustomed to respecting friends, waiting for their turn, not taking others' rights, controlling anger, and resolving problems with teacher guidance. Aswaja values such as tawassuth, tawazun, i'tidal, and tasamuh provide an important foundation for this process.

Tawassuth is reflected when children begin to control themselves. For example, children do not impose their will during play, are willing to follow classroom rules, and do not always want to win. Teachers guide children using simple language, such as "your friend also wants to play," "now it is your turn, later it will be your friend's turn," or "let us play together nicely."

Tawazun is reflected in balanced child development. Education that overly emphasizes memorization without considering play, emotional development, and social interaction can pressure children. On the other hand, education that only focuses on play without values may fail to shape character. The value of tawazun teaches that early childhood learning should be balanced between worship, learning, play, art, movement, and social interaction.

I'tidal is reflected when children are accustomed to being fair. This can be seen in the use of toys, task distribution, queuing to wash hands, or choosing roles in games. Teachers need to ensure that every child receives a proportional opportunity. Dominant children are guided not to control the game, while quieter children are supported to participate confidently.

Tasamuh is reflected when children can accept differences. In one classroom, children have different abilities, habits, and family backgrounds. Some children memorize quickly, while others need more time. Some are active, while others are shy. Some easily share, while others still need guidance. Teachers need to instill the understanding that every friend should be loved and should not be mocked. In this way, children begin to learn tolerance in a simple form.

Moderate character is also reflected in children's ability to resolve conflicts. Small conflicts such as fighting over toys, refusing to take turns, or mocking each other are part of children's social development. Teachers can turn these moments into opportunities for learning Aswaja values. Children are guided to apologize, forgive, speak kindly, and return to playing together.

5. Supporting Factors in the Internalization of Aswaja Values

Several factors support the internalization of Aswaja values in shaping religious and moderate character in early childhood. The first factor is institutional commitment. Early childhood education institutions that have an Islamic vision and religious culture will find it easier to integrate Aswaja values into daily activities. This commitment can be seen in habituation programs, religious activities, and teachers' involvement in creating a polite and friendly learning atmosphere.

The second factor is teacher competence. Teachers who understand Aswaja values and the characteristics of early childhood are able to deliver religious values appropriately. Teachers do not only teach memorization, but also guide behavior. Teachers' pedagogical and spiritual competence becomes the main key because children learn through role modeling.

The third factor is parental support. Religious and moderate habituation will become stronger when it is consistently applied at home. Parents who guide children to pray, speak politely, respect siblings, and avoid harsh words strengthen the values taught at school.

The fourth factor is the socio-religious environment. Children who grow up in an environment familiar with shalawat, religious gatherings, mosque activities, charity, and polite Islamic traditions will find it easier to accept Aswaja values. The environment becomes an experiential space that strengthens learning at school.

6. Obstacles in the Internalization of Aswaja Values

Although the internalization of Aswaja values has great potential in early childhood education, several obstacles need attention. The first obstacle is teachers' limited understanding. Some teachers may understand Aswaja only as formal religious material, not as character values that can be integrated into all learning activities.

The second obstacle is the lack of child-friendly Aswaja learning media. Aswaja materials are often presented in abstract language and are more suitable for adolescents or adults. Therefore, child-friendly media need to be developed, such as picture cards, songs, illustrated stories, hand puppets, short videos, and educational games.

The third obstacle is the inconsistency of habituation between school and home. Children who are taught to speak politely at school but often hear harsh words at home may experience value confusion. Therefore, communication between teachers and parents is highly necessary.

The fourth obstacle is the influence of digital media. Early childhood learners today are familiar with gadgets and digital content. Without proper guidance, children may imitate inappropriate behavior from what they watch, such as harsh speech, aggression, selfishness, or disrespect toward others. This becomes a challenge for Aswaja-based character education.

Aspect	Form of Internalization	Aswaja Value	Impact on Children
Prayer habituation	Prayers before learning, eating, and going home	Religious, mahabbah	Children become accustomed to remembering Allah
Greetings and manners	Morning greetings, kissing teachers' hands, polite speech	Morality, i'tidal	Children become more polite to teachers and friends
Turn-taking play	Queuing, sharing toys, group play	I'tidal, tawazun	Children learn justice and patience
Islamic storytelling	Stories of the Prophet, companions, and scholars	Mahabbah, tawassuth	Children recognize examples of goodness
Shalawat and Islamic songs	Collective shalawat and moral songs	Love for the Prophet, religiosity	Children love Islamic traditions
Social activities	Friday charity and food sharing	Tasamuh, care	Children learn empathy and concern
Conflict resolution	Apologizing and forgiving	Tawassuth, tasamuh	Children learn to live peacefully

Research Implications

This study has important implications for the development of Islamic early childhood education. First, Aswaja values need to be developed as a foundation for character education in Islamic early childhood institutions. Aswaja should not merely be treated as additional material, but should become the spirit of learning, habituation, school culture, and children's social interaction.

Second, early childhood teachers need to strengthen their understanding of child-friendly Aswaja education. Teachers should be able to translate the concepts of tawassuth, tawazun, i'tidal, and tasamuh into simple activities appropriate to children's development. Thus, Aswaja does not remain merely a term, but becomes real behavior.

Third, early childhood institutions need to develop creative Aswaja learning media. These media may include illustrated storybooks, Islamic children's songs, character value cards, group games, short videos, and daily habituation modules. Attractive media help children understand values joyfully.

Fourth, parents need to be actively involved. Schools may develop Aswaja parenting programs, habituation communication books, or joint activities with parents so that values taught at school can continue at home.

CONCLUSION

The internalization of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah values in shaping religious and moderate character in early childhood is carried out through habituation, role modeling, Islamic storytelling, songs and shalawat, educational games, institutional religious culture, and cooperation with parents. Aswaja values such as tawassuth, tawazun, i'tidal, tasamuh, mahabbah, and love for polite Islamic traditions are highly relevant to early childhood education because they can be translated into concrete behavior.

Children's religious character is formed through the habit of praying, greeting others, loving the Prophet, respecting teachers and parents, and practicing daily manners. Meanwhile, moderate character is formed through the habit of sharing, queuing, taking turns, respecting friends, accepting differences, and resolving conflicts peacefully. Aswaja education in early childhood is not effective when delivered doctrinally and abstractly. It is more appropriate when carried out through joyful direct experiences, child-friendly activities, and consistent habituation.

Therefore, Aswaja values can serve as an important foundation for building a generation of early childhood learners who are religious, polite, tolerant, balanced, and peace-loving. Islamic early childhood education institutions need to make Aswaja the basis of character education integrated into learning activities, school culture, and family collaboration.

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