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Young children 'almost completely selfish'

PTI

LONDON: Parents who attempt to ingrain egalitarian ideas among very young children are bound to feel frustrated, for a research suggests that kids become more egalitarian only as they grow older.

According to a study by Swiss scientists, children learn the principles of equality by the age of eight.

The study, which is published in the latest August issue of online journal Nature, showed that majority of three and four-year-olds are inherently selfish. However, by the age of seven, most have acquired the ability to consider other peoples feelings.

"At age three to four, the overwhelming majority of children behave selfishly, whereas most children at age seven-eight prefer resource allocations that remove advantageous or disadvantageous inequality," says Dr Ernst Fehr, who led the research at the University of Zurich.

At the age of three, children were "almost completely selfish", says Fehr.

When Scientists asked 229 Swiss schoolchildren to share packets of sweets with another child of the same age, they found that three and four-year-olds rarely gave their partners any sweets. Fewer than 10 per cent of them shared the sweets equally, the research found.

However, when the same experiment was carried out with seven and eight-year-olds, Scientists came across dramatic change. Most children routinely chose the fairest options.

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