

# Business Standard

## Are you in a 'swag gap' relationship? How it impacts mental health

*The invisible divide between partners in confidence and visibility or 'swag gap' is a modern love dilemma. Experts explain how keeping up with your partner's social presence can affect mental health*

Barkha Mathur | New Delhi



When one partner's confidence outshines the other, love can quietly turn into comparison, say experts. (Photo: AdobeStock)

In a world of constant comparison and curated confidence, love is no longer just about chemistry. It is increasingly becoming about how we measure ourselves against the person we are with. Is your partner's charisma, confidence, or social 'presence' making you feel smaller, even when they're not trying to? According to experts, this imbalance, called the 'swag gap', is reshaping modern relationships and [mental health](#).

### What is 'Swag Gap'?

If you have ever caught yourself comparing your partner's confidence, social ease, or career achievements to your own, you have probably felt the swag gap.

Psychologist and human rights activist Dr Malini Saba, founder of the Saba Family Foundation, explains, "The 'swag gap' is not about money, fashion, or popularity.

It is that invisible imbalance when one partner begins to feel smaller next to the other.”

This imbalance, she says, may not be intentional. “When one person starts comparing their worth to their partner’s perceived ‘swagger’, things shift inside. Love loses its softness.”

### **Is social media affecting relationships?**

Today, everything is on display, and relationships are no longer private spaces but curated performances.

“Relationships have almost become a public performance,” says Dr Saba. “When one person appears more ‘put together’ or admired, the other often feels invisible. You start measuring your relationship in likes and impressions rather than shared feelings.”

Psychiatrist Dr Gorav Gupta, CEO of Tulasi Healthcare, adds that social media “amplifies the swagger gap” by turning love into a comparison game.

“The constant pursuit of likes and validation fosters comparison not just with strangers but within relationships themselves,” he explains. “It triggers envy, lowers self-esteem, and contributes to anxiety and depressive symptoms.”

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### **What happens when your partner seems to 'outshine' you?**

According to Dr Saba, the partner who feels overshadowed may start shrinking. “They question their value, try harder to please, or emotionally pull away to protect themselves. It’s exhausting to constantly feel like you’re catching up,” she said.

Dr Gupta notes that this [mental strain](#) often manifests as anxiety, irritability, sleep disturbances, and social withdrawal, all are early warning signs that self-worth is eroding.

### **More difficult for women who shine more than their partners: Experts**

Very often, yes, and that’s because society still has not fully accepted women taking the lead, emotionally or professionally.

“Some women feel pressure to downplay achievements to maintain harmony,” says Dr Saba. “They laugh off compliments or use self-deprecating humour. It is social conditioning. The key is to reclaim that space without guilt.”

## How can couples bridge the swag gap before it turns toxic?

The first step is to acknowledge it. “Shift the focus from competition to complement,” advises Dr Saba. “Maybe one partner brings visibility, the other brings calm or balance. Those differences can create harmony, not hierarchy.”

Dr Gupta recommends therapy approaches like Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) to rebuild empathy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to manage self-critical thoughts. “The goal,” he says, “is to move from performing worth to feeling worthy, both individually and together.”

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