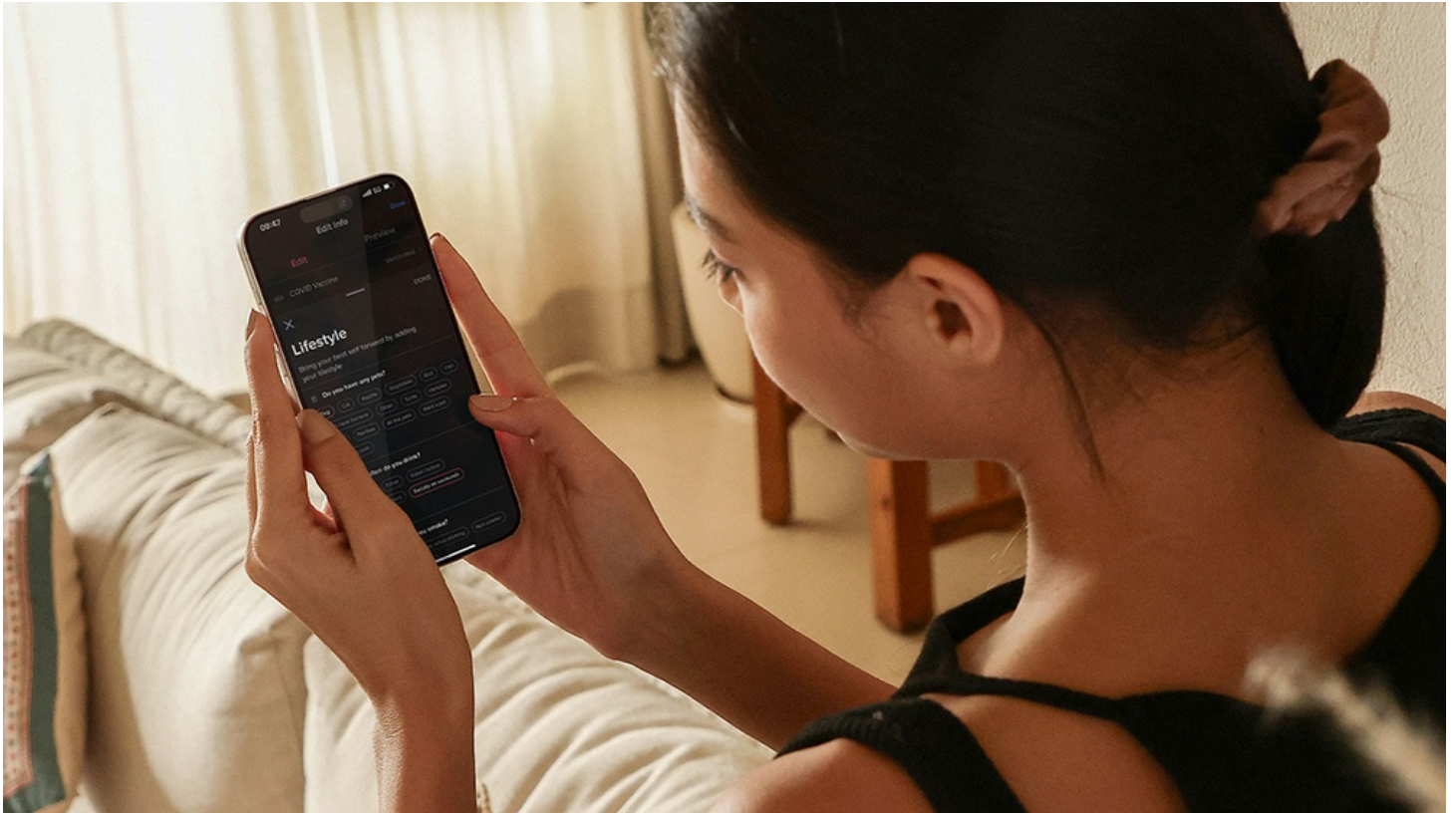


The Rise of the Baddie, Paglu, Pookie: A New Language of Love



New Delhi, India – April 15, 2026: Gen Z's new bio lexicon feels playful at first glance, but look closer and it reveals far more. Baddie has evolved into a marker of aspiration, a sharp departure from the 'bad girl' label of the '90s. Paglu reads like a badge of devotion, tied to everything from pickleball (+65% mentions on Tinder)¹ and matcha (+40%)¹ to the gym (+25%)¹, Mahjong (+18%)¹ and Pilates (+7%)¹. Pookie lands soft and easy, becoming modern dating's most effortless term of endearment.

India's new vocabulary of love

In just a year, baddie has claimed main-character status - up nearly 5x in Tinder bios. Paglu has surged over 40x, reflecting a comfort with playful intimacy, and while Pookie may no longer dominate the conversation, it continues to linger - soft, steady, and unmistakably enduring.

Not just cute but coded

According to **Dr. Chandni Tugnait, Tinder India's relationship expert**, these terms are less about what you want and more about how you see someone - micro-cues of attraction, comfort, and intrigue.

- Baddie signals admiration
- Pookie signals warmth and safety, and
- Paglu signals playful fondness

"These terms aren't just expressive, they're perceptive," she says. "You're signalling how you read someone, even before anything is defined."

Why it works

From strangers to something more

Endearments show up early for a reason. "They act as emotional accelerators," says Dr. Tugnait. "A private name creates

instant closeness, it signals someone is no longer a stranger.”

It’s also why humour leads. “**Apaglu or a meme softens vulnerability**, making interest feel lighter, easier. Increasingly,” she adds. It’s also identity-coded - gym paglu, matcha paglu - where shared hobbies matter as much as chemistry.

A language shaped by culture

“This shift in language is closely tied to larger cultural and psychological changes,” says Dr. Tugnait. **Therapy-informed vocabulary** - ideas like emotional safety, attachment styles, and boundaries - has become part of everyday conversation, which brings a certain self-awareness to how young people express interest and affection.”

“**Attachment styles** often show up subtly in the language people use,” says Dr. Tugnait. “Someone who leans towards assertive, status-affirming terms like ‘baddie’ or ‘queen’ may value independence, expressing admiration more than emotional need. Softer terms like ‘pookie’ or ‘baby’ tend to signal comfort with closeness, pointing to a more secure - or sometimes anxious - approach to intimacy. Playful nicknames like ‘paglu’ often sit in between, using humour to create connection while keeping vulnerability light.”

She adds, “**These patterns aren’t definitive, but they are telling. Language can offer small cues into how someone relates to closeness, but it’s only one part of the picture, what really matters is how consistently those cues show up in behaviour over time.**”

What stands out is the mix. A pookie can exist alongside a paglu in the same breath - softness layered with play, global with local. It reflects a generation that doesn’t commit to one emotional tone, but moves fluidly between many. In modern dating, connection isn’t defined by a single feeling - it’s shaped by nuance, contradiction, and the freedom to express both at once.

¹*Year in Swipe 2025 - Tinder Internal Data from September 2024 to September 2025. Referenced statistics taken from the 2025 International Opinium Survey.*

²*Internal Data from Tinder Bios, Descriptors, and Interests from January-March 2025 and January-March 2026.*

About Tinder

Launched in 2012, Tinder® revolutionized how people meet, growing from 1 match to one billion matches in just two years. This rapid growth demonstrates its ability to fulfill a fundamental human need: real connection. Today, the app has been downloaded over 630 million times, leading to over 100 billion matches, serving 185+ countries and 60+ languages - a scale unmatched by any other app in the category.

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