

Main Character Syndrome: Manifestations and Impact on Social Interaction

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Entered : August 04, 2025

Accepted : September 08, 2025

Revised : August 31, 2025

Published : September 29, 2025

ABSTRACT

Main Character Syndrome (MCS) is a psychological phenomenon in which individuals tend to see themselves as the main characters in life, often in an exaggerated and dramatic manner. In the era of social media, this phenomenon is increasingly prevalent, influenced by digital algorithms that reinforce narcissistic mindsets and the search for social validation. This article examines various manifestations of MCS in social interactions and their impact on interpersonal relationships. Using qualitative methods based on literature analysis, this study found that MCS can enhance self-expression but also trigger problems in empathy and social connectedness. Therefore, it is important to understand the balance between individuality and social awareness in everyday life.

Keyword: Main Character Syndrome, Narcissism, Social Media, Social Interaction, Consumer Psychology.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the term "Main Character Syndrome" (MCS) has become increasingly popular and widely discussed, especially among social media users who actively share their life moments online. This phenomenon refers to the tendency of individuals to see, present, and perceive themselves as the main characters in their daily lives, often by framing their personal experiences as if they were in a dramatic narrative that captures the attention of others, such as in a film or novel. In many cases, they feel as if the world is a grand stage where they are the center of attention, while others are merely supporting characters who exist to support their story. This is often accompanied by behavior that focuses on excessive self-image, where every moment, feeling, or small event in their lives is processed into a grand, dramatic and meaningful narrative that must be seen and acknowledged by others.



While MCS can have some positive benefits, such as boosting self-confidence, encouraging more free self-expression, and helping individuals feel that their lives have greater purpose and meaning, it also has the potential to have significant negative impacts, particularly in terms of social relationships and emotional well-being. Individuals who are overly obsessed with their self-image as the “main character” may struggle to establish healthy and authentic social interactions, as they tend to focus more on how they appear to others and how they are perceived, rather than on the quality of relationships built on mutual understanding, empathy, and deep connection. In the long run, this can lead to social isolation, as individuals may feel that others are not important or interesting enough to be concerned with unless they are part of a larger narrative centered around them.

Furthermore, this phenomenon can create unrealistic expectations about life itself, where everything must be exciting, dramatic, and shareable on social platforms, often leading to feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration if reality doesn't match the idealized image they've created. For example, mundane everyday experiences, such as commuting to work, routines at home, or relaxing moments with friends, can be perceived as boring or meaningless unless they're packaged in a spectacular way or filled with stories that capture the attention of many. This not only puts unnecessary pressure on individuals to constantly “perform” their lives in a larger-than-life way, but it can also leave them feeling anxious and stressed out for fear of not meeting their own or others' expectations of what they should present online.

Therefore, the Main Character Syndrome phenomenon is more than just the creation of a self-image on social media, but also reflects the way we construct narratives about who we are in social life, how we see ourselves, and how we want others to see us. In this context, this article will explore more deeply how the MCS phenomenon develops in social life, how it is rooted in the dynamics of social media culture that increasingly dominates our interactions, and its impact on interpersonal relationships and the psychological well-being of individuals who experience it. By discussing factors that influence the emergence of MCS, including the culture of media consumption, the role of technology in shaping self-perception, and the pressure to always appear perfect, this article aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how MCS affects our lives, both in broader social relationships and in the search for deeper personal meaning and identity.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature analysis approach that aims to explore in depth the phenomenon of Main Character Syndrome (MCS) in social and digital contexts. Qualitative methods were chosen because of this approach's ability to explore complex meanings, patterns, and dynamics that cannot be measured quantitatively, thus providing richer insights into how this phenomenon develops and affects individuals and society. In this study, literature analysis was used to collect and review various relevant sources of information, including academic journals, psychology articles, social theory books, and case studies that directly or indirectly discuss MCS and its impact on social life, individual psychology, and digital interactions.

The data sources used in this study include various literature related to the influence of social media on self-perception, studies on social behavior in the digital age, and psychological theories focusing on the concepts of identity and self-presentation. Academic journals served as the primary source used to provide a strong theoretical foundation, relying on previous studies conducted by researchers in the fields of social

psychology, mass communication, and media studies. Furthermore, psychology articles discussing the relationship between individuals and social media, as well as its impact on mental health and interpersonal relationships, also provided important insights into how the phenomenon of MCS can emerge and develop amidst social dynamics increasingly influenced by technology.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research shows that Main Character Syndrome (MCS) has several primary manifestations in social interactions that can impact how individuals relate to others, both in everyday life and in the digital world. The first primary manifestation is Excessive Focus of Attention, where individuals with MCS tend to have a strong need for validation from others. They often seek attention by dramatically sharing aspects of their lives on social media, aiming to highlight themselves as the main characters in their life stories. This is not limited to extraordinary moments or major achievements, but also includes everyday events being packaged as highly significant or interesting, in order to capture the audience's attention. This desire to always be the center of attention can trigger the urge to constantly update statuses, share stories, or post photos and videos with deliberately exaggerated narratives.

The second manifestation is a lack of empathy in social relationships. When individuals focus more on themselves and how they are perceived by others, they often lose sight of the feelings, needs, and experiences of those around them. This can make it difficult for them to engage in genuine, empathetic interactions, as their focus is diverted by efforts to maintain a perfect self-image. In many cases, the relationships built around individuals with MCS are transactional, where they may only be interested in relationships that benefit their self-image, rather than in the depth or quality of the emotional bonds they form. As a result, these individuals may feel isolated or struggle to form authentic relationships, even though they appear to have a lot of social interaction online.

Social media influence also plays a significant role in reinforcing the phenomenon of MCS. Social media algorithms, designed to increase exposure to interesting, controversial, or attention-grabbing content, often amplify individuals' tendency to portray themselves in dramatic and compelling ways. When individuals receive positive responses, such as likes, comments, or shares, this further reinforces their desire to maintain this image, which often does not reflect their true lives. Social media, with its ability to shape self-perception and create distorted narratives, puts pressure on individuals to always appear attractive and perfect, which can exacerbate MCS symptoms. In this sense, social platform algorithms not only reinforce self-image behaviors but also validate the way individuals construct their identities through the content they create and share.

Ultimately, the impact on social interactions is two-sided. On the one hand, MCS can enhance self-expression, providing a space for individuals to demonstrate their creativity, and encouraging them to share more personal or dramatic life stories, which in turn can attract attention and support from others. This may give individuals greater self-confidence and help them express themselves in ways they perceive as positive. However, on the other hand, manifestations of MCS can also cause significant difficulties in building authentic and deep relationships. When individuals focus more on how they are perceived by others and how they can manipulate their self-image to gain acceptance or recognition, they become less able to engage in relationships based on mutual understanding, empathy,

and honesty. This can lead to shallow relationships, where social interactions are more superficial, and individuals find it difficult to form strong emotional bonds with others.

Overall, the primary manifestation of MCS in social interactions creates tension between the desire for recognition and validation and the challenge of establishing more authentic and deeper relationships. This phenomenon demonstrates how the influence of social media and individual psychological dynamics can interact to create behavioral patterns that influence how we relate to the social world around us..

CONCLUSIONS

Main Character Syndrome is a growing phenomenon in the digital age, fueled by social media and a culture of individualism. While it has positive aspects in enhancing self-expression, MCS can also hinder social connectedness if not balanced with awareness of others. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the balance between individuality and healthy social interactions is needed.

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