

In November 2020, I started to see fake accounts on Facebook share my photos. These accounts would pop up every 5 minutes of one being deleted and would spam me with notifications until the account was blocked. I immediately changed my settings, however the harassment continued. When I had made my account more private, the accounts started to harass my friends and my family, starting with my mother. Accounts on Instagram also began to pop up, although this time they would comment on my photos, spamming me with notifications again. I quickly made my Instagram account fully private as well. A few months later, and I had started to receive messages from the fake accounts, with the messages mentioning a 'game' that they were playing with me. They then went on to increase the harassment of my friends and family. When I reached out to police, they were unable to do anything, as Facebook does not like handing over information, and the fake accounts gave no proof as to who was behind it, despite me having a pretty good idea of the culprit. The accounts started to increase in severity around June 2021, as they began to make sexually based rumours about myself, my family, and some of my friends and their families. These included calling my parents paedophiles who had abused me and my sisters, which was incredibly upsetting to my parents and myself. The increasing level of harassment and abuse, coupled with the fact that police were essentially unable to help me, left me feeling very helpless and frustrated. Reporting these accounts rarely resulted in them being taken down, as Facebook did not deem them as impersonating or violating community guidelines, even though they were. Blocking the accounts was Facebook's other suggestion, however it would only result in a new one popping up. I was even told by police to 'just stay off social media for a while' even though it might be 'hard for a young person like you', which is unfair and wrong to say to someone suffering this kind of abuse, especially when I had already had everything shut down for 6 months by then. I feel as if I have been left to deal with this alone, because there is no law or legislation that covers my scenario. The comments made would fit a defamation civil case, but once again there was no legal proof of who was behind the accounts. There needs to be more that the police or government can do to help people in scenarios like mine. Even if police were allowed to get an IP address from these accounts, they would have been able to identify the individual and then proceed with my case. There needs to be something introduced that can take away the anonymity of people who abuse the easy access that social media sites provide.