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## Youth Offenders: Gold Chain Snatchers

**Dr. Mamta Patel**

Associate Professor, Department of Criminology and Forensic Science,  
Dr. Harisingh Gour (Central) University, India

### **Abstract:**

*Youth offenders are finding chain snatching lucrative them ever before because of quick returns. Now even the time of the day does not matter to offenders, when it comes to chain snatching. A single stolen gold chain could fetch anywhere between Rs. 5,000 to 50,000. Chain snatchers have fixed 'agents' in the market who buy the stolen gold from them for a good sum. This paper addresses the different techniques and reasons for chain snatching. The study involved 325 cases of chain snatching which were reported in print media in five years. The data was analysed by using content analysis method. The result shows that the mainly motorbike riders youth were the offenders of chain snatching. Preventive measures and effective solutions to social problems are easy to find where the root causes of such problems are established.*

**Keywords:** Victim, offender, chain snatching

### **1. Introduction**

Youth involvement in crime is a perennial issue of interest for the media, government and researchers. Youth make up nearly a third of India. The number of adolescents (10 to 19 years old) in India is over 25 crores while youth, defined by the census as people between 15 and 24 number 23 crores. The total young population between 10 and 24 years is nearly 36.5 crore – more than 30% of population (The Times of India: 3 November, 2014).

The youth, in a rising nation like ours, plays a strong role in bringing reforms to restructure the nation. They protest and demand what is best for the nation. However, lately, in order to earn quick bucks and the need to fulfil their dreams and desires at the earliest, young people have resorted to unlawful means to achieve them. It is important to know that over the last five years' heinous crimes like sexual offence and murder are committed by the youth are increased in our country. But do rising crimes figures give the entire picture? Many points out the official data is not nuanced, so often cases reported as sexual offence by minors are consensual love affairs or even instances of exploring sex ([www.youthkiawazz.com](http://www.youthkiawazz.com)).

There are various approaches to understanding youthful offending. In the first place, one can look at offending as a symptom of some kind of underlying problem. This problem could be biological or psychological, or it could be social (e.g., a symptom of inadequacy in child rearing or impact of poverty). Second, one can see youthful offending as a symptom of an inadequate of crime control system (e.g., inadequate number of police, inadequate severity of punishment or inadequate forms of social control in the community). Third, one could look at youthful offending as being a natural consequence of growing up (Anthony, N. D., Carla, C., 2004).

#### *1.1. Tools and Techniques for Snatching*

Police is perturbed with the increasing number of chain snatching incidents. The snatchers are in a habit of using speedy bikes, so chasing them on ordinary bike is not helping the cops particularly in the narrow lanes and by-lanes- the escape routes mostly preferred by the criminals. These bikes fitted with latest gizmos and gadgets have better speed and fuel efficiency. Police teams riding old bikes cannot compete with the new age bikes and thus the snatchers banking on the 150-175cc high speed bikes vanish within seconds. Snatchers are targeting morning walkers and women. Mainly they are striking between 7.30pm and 4.30pm using fake number plates on their bikes to avoid being tracked (The Times of India: 8 June, 2010).

#### *1.2. Chain Snatchers Ready to Hit Hard, if Resisted*

Chain snatchers are increasingly resorting to violence while committing a crime. Earlier, the chain snatchers, used to shy away from attacking the victims, rather taking them by surprise and fleeing from the spot in a jiffy. Now, if the victim raises alarm or resists the chain snatchers, they don't think twice before assaulting the chain owner (The Times of India: 11 August, 2010). Chain snatchers are not only adopting modern ways to commit a crime, but they are also roping in amateurs into the big bad world of crime (The Times of India: 22 May, 2009).

### 1.3. Non-Government-Organization

Stree Shakti Groups launch awareness campaign against chain snatching incidents. The campaign aims at creating awareness among women on preventive measures and sensitising the police on the need to show some pro-activeness in not only arresting the culprits but taking necessary preventive measures to prevent such crimes. Meanwhile, the city police also decided to take up massive awareness drive, install more CCTV cameras in different part of the city and ready striking parties at shortest notice of the chain snatching incident or other crime ([www.in.newshub.org](http://www.in.newshub.org)).

### 1.4. Chain Snatching

Crime against women, including rape, molestation and chain snatching, have risen sharply in the metropolis in 2013-14, while conviction rate of serious offences fell to an abysmal low of eight percent slowed a report compiled by an NGO ([www.mid-day.com/snatch/chain-snatching](http://www.mid-day.com/snatch/chain-snatching)). Increase in the number of crime of chain snatching has become a problem, especially for the women across the country. The skyrocketing gold prices, is one of the reasons for the spurt in crime. The price of gold has shot up tremendously in the past couple years therefore, it has become more lucrative. Easy modus operandi make it a simple crime to commit. Chain snatching doesn't require skills. All it requires is a bike and two able hands. Also the criminals wear helmets which make it difficult to identify them. A majority of them use stolen bikes, so even the bike number is not useful in most cases ([www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com)).

## 2. Literature Review

Youth criminal, a person who is between 16 -25 years, i.e., one who is in his late adolescence and early adulthood, and one who has still a dependency status, has been regarded as youth (Ahuja, Ram; 1996). Various observations indicate that most of them are in crime because of poverty, which drove them into criminal acts for survival (Prior & Paris; 2005). Some boys indicate that they had run from home to beg for survival in the streets because they lacked basic needs. In those streets they latter committed crimes to survive, they were involved in petty offences. The opinion of Write and Younts (2009) that the delinquency rates increases with a decrease in social class. Some youth get into crime due to peer pressure and rebellion against parental authority (Maseko; 2009). Erickson (2001), observed that drugs also leads the crime. Ojo (2012) lists broken and low educate attainment as some of the causes of delinquency. West and Farmington (1973) propose that like low family income, large family size is a characteristic feature of offenders first convicted at as an early age. Eckersley and Dear (2002) conclude that other than break up of families, individualism and rapid technological development are factors that cause crime among the youth. Goldson, B. & Muncie, J. (2006), the decline in parental discipline, too much pocket money, or the so called crisis of childhood, adolescents today are said to pose more of a threat to the social order than at any time in the past.

## 3. Objectives

Crimes by the youth, especially chain snatching, have been perceived as a burning problem. This problem is not only affecting the women but also the whole society. Keeping this point in view, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To identify the different reasons for the chain snatching by the youth.
2. To explore the different techniques used by the youth for committing crime.
3. To know the type of punishment was awarded to the offenders.

## 4. Research Methodology

The present study was carried out on 325 victims of chain snatching both male and female. Victims age ranging from 18 to above 80 years and have been residing in Kanpur, Bhopal, and Sagar city. In this research work the newspaper reports (Hindustan Times M.P. Edition, Bhopal, 2010-2014, The Times of India, U.P. Edition, Kanpur, 2010-2014, and Dainik- Bhasker M.P. Edition, Sagar, 2010-2014) have been the source of data. The news items relating to the crime of chain snatching have been collected systematically and their content were analyzed and presented. Total 325 cases were found reported in print media, in the period of five years. The secondary data were taken in this study and presented in a tabular form. Thus the method of content analyses has been used to know the facts of the cases. In the print media report, researcher found information on victim's gender, victim's age, scene of crime, crime commission time, number of victims, number of offenders, reasons of crime, and way of chain snatching, punishment for crime.

## 5. Findings of the Study

Victim's Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	8	2.46
Female	317	97.53
Total	325	100.00

Table 1: Victim's Gender

Table 1, shows that 97.53% of victims were female and only 2.46% male were found victims of chain snatchers. In India, mostly females are use ornaments especially, gold chain. It is custom and tradition that married ladies wear MANGAL-SUTRA or gold chain, even unmarried girls also use chain as a tradition or fashion. Male also wear gold chain but when we compare the number is very less

than female. In typology of victims, it is also found that females are easily targeted by the offenders. Same in this study that females are more victims than male.

Victim's Age	Number	Percentage
18-29	26	08.00
30-39	43	13.23
40-49	36	11.07
50-59	40	12.30
60-69	35	10.76
70-79	10	03.07
80 And Above	04	01.23
N.M.	131	40..30
Total	325	100.00

Table 2: Victim's Age

In Table 2, Victim's age shows that from 18 to more than 80 years aged victims were targeted by the chain snatchers. Highest number of victims belongs to age group between 30-39 years. 3.07% cases belong to 70 - 79 years of age group. Only 1.23% cases were pertaining the age 80 and above years. The Age group shows that from 18 years to all age group were the victims of chain snatching. In this study it was found that offenders had targeted all age of victims.

Vehicle Used By Offenders	Number	Percentage
Without Bike	43	13.23
Motorbike	282	86.76
Total	325	100.00

Table 3: Vehicle Used By Offenders

In Table 3, reveals that 86.76% offenders were found committed crime with the help of motorcycle. Some motorbikes were found without number or fake number and these were used by the offenders. Only 13.23% offenders were without vehicle. Pillion riders had played an important role for snatching the victim's chain.

In most of the cases, two offenders were involved in chain snatching. In some cases, it was also found that where only one offender was involved during the commission of crime. In Least cases it was also noticed that where the crime was committed by without using of motorbike by the offenders.

Resisting Crime	Number	Percentage
Yes	225	69.23
N.M.	100	30.76
Total	325	100.00

Table 4: Resisting Crime

Table 4 reveals that 69.23% victims were resisted the crime of chain snatching. In 30.76% cases were not mentioned about the crime resisting. Crime resisting is a natural phenomenon but it is too risky for one's life.

Injured	Number	Percentage
Yes	42	12.92
No/N.M.	283	87.07
Total	325	100.00

Table 5: Injured During Snatching

Table 5 indicates that 12.92% women were injured during chain snatching. In many cases victims were injured with the butt of a country made pistol and the offenders were decamped with their gold chains. In one case victim was reportedly shot dead by a chain snatcher on resisting his attempt to loot her gold chain.

### 5.1. Law and Order (Punishment)

51 cases of arrest have been found during the years 2010-2014. In some cases, offenders were found punished "A Delhi court has sentenced two youths to three years in jail for snatching a woman's gold chain and injuring her, observing that they didn't observe leniency due to gravity of offence (www.munsif.tv)". "Upper court judge declared judgement against two accused to 7-7 year of labour punishment and 2-2 thousand Rs. Fines under Indian Penal Code for chain snatching from woman" (Dainik Bhasker:14 March, 2014). The cases are still found reported in police station; this punishment is not able to maintain to curb the crimes of chain snatching.

## 6. Discussion

In this research work, result shows that 97.53% female were the victims of chain snatching crime, whereas 2.46% males were the victims of same crime. Nearly 37% cases were the age from 30 to 59 years old. Even 15% cases of elderly women were the victims of chain snatchings by the youths. Case 1, "Two unidentified bikers snatched a gold chain from the neck of 70-year old woman at afternoon" (Hindustan Times: 18 March, 2013). In 87% cases two offenders were found involved in chain snatching. First offender always rides the motorcycle and pillion riders mostly snatched the chain.

Chain snatchers have been found increasingly resorting to violence while committing a crime. Earlier, the chain snatchers used to shy away from attacking the victims. Now, if the victim raises an alarm or resists the chain snatchers, they don't think twice before assaulting the victim. Case 2, "Man Was returning home after dropping her daughter, one of the youth whipped out a firearm another youth gripped and snatched gold chain and other valuables" (The Times of India: 27 August 2012). The riders mostly keep their faces covered. Cops have also instructed to keep a tab on the motorcycle riders who keep their faces covered. In most of the cases pillion riders snatched the chain. Case3, "Two unidentified motorcycle borne miscreants snatched a gold chain from a married woman. At about 6:30 p.m., the miscreants came from behind and the youth riding pillion snatched the chain" (Hindustan Times: 8 March, 2012). Thus snatchers banking on the 150 -175 cc high speed bikes vanish within seconds. They strike between 7.30PM and 4.30 PM use fake number plates to avoid being tracked. The chain snatchers frequently change their clothes to avoid being caught. The number plates on the front and back of their vehicles differ. If someone keeps track of the number, the miscreants quickly change than, and escape.

Most of the chain snatchers are from outskirts and bordering district and they normally target women commuting alone on desolate stretches. Near parks and health centres are also seeing the same kind of crime. They also take advantage of thin police presence early in the morning.

According to police, their modus operandi is very interesting yet simple as they target women in upscale colonies wearing jewellery and or on foot ([www.yespunjab.com](http://www.yespunjab.com)).

It was also learnt that most of the places where the offenders strike is poorly lit and policed. Heavy workload and using these mobile parties to provide security for VIP movement, processions and other works, is decreasing the presence of the police on interior lanes.

In several cases, the offenders use stolen vehicles by fixing fictitious number plates. Most of the chain disposed off in the sarrafa bazaar. Robbed jewellery melted and given new forms within the hours. While the crooks look for easy money, the jewellers purchase the looted gold at premium rate.

In many cases police have claimed arresting a gang of robbers that were involving in several cases of chain snatching. In many cases offenders were involved for chain snatching for many reasons Case 4, "Two students were arrested by the police for chain snatching. Both hail from affluent families and claimed that they had committed crime for fun" (The Times of India: 30 July 2011). It was also found that fire arms or knives were used only on male victims by the offenders. Case 5, "One of the youth whipped out a fire arm another youth grabbed man and snatched gold chain and other valuables" (The Times of India: 27 August, 2012).

Even the police team caught high tech gang that was behind several chain snatching cases. The three-member gang used high speed bikes and online navigator services like Google maps for their operations. They were also using forged registration number on his bikes for chain snatching ([www.timesofIndia.com](http://www.timesofIndia.com)).

In one case 6, "the lady has been awarded by 10,000 Rs. for her bravery. When a miscreant snatched the gold chain, she ran behind the snatcher nearly one kilometre and raised the alarm for incidence. Hearing the noise some people caught the snatcher and beat by hands and feet and given to the police (Danik Bhasker:29 Nov.2014).

## 7. Conclusions

Cases of snatching have left the fairer sex scared. Women and girls are falling easy prey to criminals. Despite the police claims that they are not organised but if their well-polished modus- operandi, which includes weather, time, action, and selection of areas, is any indication, the pillion riding gang of chain snatchers are very much organised.

Offenders are findings chain snatching lucrative them before because of quick returns. Now even the time of the day does not matter to miscreants, when it comes chain snatching.

Policies, attitudes and actions change with the wisdom acquired over the years. The criminal youths who are only in early and mid-twenties of their life have a feeling that the best is yet to be. Opportunities have, therefore to be provided to them for social functioning. They have to remain active participants in family and community affairs. Without such participation, youth will lack a meaningful social place and may even withdraw from life which may prove to be detrimental to society.

Increasing cases of chain snatching have become a worry for the people. Police, however, feel that ostentatious display of jewellery attracts undue attention and can invite trouble. The gangs involved in chain snatching accost their target either on pretext of asking address or posing as policemen. The target is mostly serious citizen or women walking on the road at lonely stretches or during morning walks. With public cooperation cases of chain snatching can be curbed.

We can learn from history that each successive historical age has ardently believed that an unprecedented "crisis" in youth behaviour is taking place. We are not unique; our fears do not differ significantly from those of our predecessors. Statistics are complex things to interpret. Rising youth crime statistics since the 1940s are the result of a whole series of factors and do not mean that youth are becoming more "immoral". Our treatment of young offenders is in many ways harsher than it has been in the past. This has not been successful in reducing our fear of crime; if anything, it is compounding the problem and increasing mistrust between the generations ([www.historyextra.com](http://www.historyextra.com)).The curbing of chain snatching cases are found in the year 2014, where only five cases have been found

reported in print media. It shows that decrease in crime rate. But in another side now women are alert for crime and even police surveillance is also helpful towards reducing crime of chain snatching.

For Indian woman losing her sacred thread (gold chain/mangalsutra) means her husband died and chain snatching will not only be monetary loss to her but it affects her mentally and it may lead to difference of opinion in her family and it would be fulfilled in the human society. This is a real dilemma of woman that wearing of gold chain and taking opportunity by the offender by snatching it.

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