

## Child Labor in Pakistan: Investigating the Role of Pakistani Government for Controlling Child Labor

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**Abstract:** *This research paper is aimed to provide a thorough analysis of the availability of resources causing success or failure for the implementation of child labor laws in Pakistan. In Pakistan, the child labor laws are followed properly by the government. Despite the government taking initiatives and introducing plans for the improvement of the child protection system showed considerably negative results. Currently, Pakistan has millions of children working in different factories, farms, and mines. The poor implementation of initiated programs and introduced laws for the child protection system is the main reason behind the increasing number of cases for child labor. A report has identified that lack of education, resources, family structures, and family size are the main reasons for child labor. Based on these arguments, this study is aimed to investigate and analyse child labor, child abuse, and denial of children's rights in Pakistan.*

**Key Words:** Child Labor, Pakistan, Law, Lack of Resources, Abuse, Rights

### Introduction

For any developing nation, the youth of the country play an important role. The youth is the integral stakeholder that is responsible for running the country and holds the future in their hands. Most importantly, the educated youth is more important ([Sadia Farooq, 2020](#)). The significance of this idea relies on the fact that young children get the right to education so they can grow into educated and mature youngsters ([Fatima, 2017](#)).

However, this is not possible to achieve in an environment where child labor is so common. This is unfortunate that the future of children is not secure in the developing nations mainly because they do not have access to schools and particularly education. Hence their family indulges them in small and medium scale businesses, and they become the victims of child labor. This is why the child labor is a problem ([Iqbal, Zafar, Kausar, Asaad 2020](#)).

According to the World Labor Organization, there are over 120 million children who work full-time in different companies, factories, farms, etc., while 130 million kids work as part-time underage employees. Child labor is common in developing nations that produce labor-intensive goods and commodities ([Fatima, 2017](#)). The saddest part is

that both native and global businesses are buying items made by firms that use child labor. Despite the fact that it violates the doctrines of WHO and ILO, there is no serious action being taken.

The notion of child labor is not new in Pakistan. Poverty and lack of resources forced the families to send their children to work from an early age ([Sadia Farooq, 2020](#)). In Pakistan, the child labor dates back to the tenor of Zia Ul Haq, who encouraged capitalism and the new factories were in need of more labor, so the child wage rate was lesser, and hence the demand for child labor increased ([Iqbal, Zafar, Kausar, Asaad 2020](#)). The factory owners were capitalists, and they were interested in output only, so they neglected the cons of child employment and hired as many children as they could to increase their output and profits (Fatima, 2017).

Child labor is a serious concern in all four provinces of Pakistan. In Sindh, the children are working in various sectors, and child labor is not restricted to a specific area or city only. The government has been making policies to promote education since the year 2000. However, child labor has not decreased yet. Children as young as ten years old are employed in Punjab. The reason is that the families need money which is definitely

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not coming from the education. The scenario in Baluchistan and KPK is quite similar to the provinces of Sindh and Punjab. Baluchistan is the poorest of all provinces, so the economic issues and poverty are greater than ever there.

According to research, not all forms of child labor are negative; some can have a positive impact, too, such as babysitting, jobs in the library, etc., having the potential to be beneficial. However, child trafficking or pornographic activities are the worst and create a psychological impact on the children.

## Overview of Child About

Child labor is the result of capitalism as children are cost-effective, which is why the capitalist hires children. Children are the future of any nation and mankind, and it is crucial that nations protect the children and their future. Child labor has adverse effects on young workers, and it can cause them certain diseases such as anemia, malnutrition, and many other infectious diseases (Rehman, Ashfaq, 2019).

## Causes of Child Labor

According to the research conducted by ILO and the Federal Bureau of Statistics, in 1996, 4 million children were employed in the labor sector (Fatima, 2017). These children are between the age of 5-14 years and serve in different sectors (Rehman, Ashfaq, 2019). According to statistics, 73% of the child laborers are male, while the remaining 27% are females (Sadia Farooq, 2020).

Most of the children are working at homes and are unpaid illiterate workers. There are various factors for the growing child labor trend in Pakistan. First of all, the population in rural areas is rising, and poverty is the reason that families cannot sustain themselves unless they send underage kids to work (Rehman, Ashfaq, 2019). Secondly, education and school facilities are not available in villages and small towns, so parents prefer to send their children to work, rather than providing them with expensive education. Moreover, unemployment, poverty, lack of education, overpopulation, and health care are the major factors that force children to work (Sadia Farooq, 2020).

## Worst Forms of Child Labor in Pakistan

The worst form of child labor comes from poverty which creates an everlasting impact on the children (Sadia Farooq, 2020). Poor families send their kids to work in factories, farms, and mines,

and as a result of this, the children lose their childhood. The working conditions create a negative impact on their minds, and this leads to psychological issues and problems once they grow older (Fatima, 2017). The worst form of child labor leads to negative effects when it comes to growth and development (Ashfaq, Asia, Rabia Ali, 2017).

## Methodology

### Research Question

- How the government plays an economic role in preventing child labor?
- Why the social issues the main reason behind the increasing trend of child labor?
- What important role can political leadership play in implementing the laws pertaining to child labor?

### Research Hypothesis

Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated: Government plays an economic role in preventing child labor in Pakistan

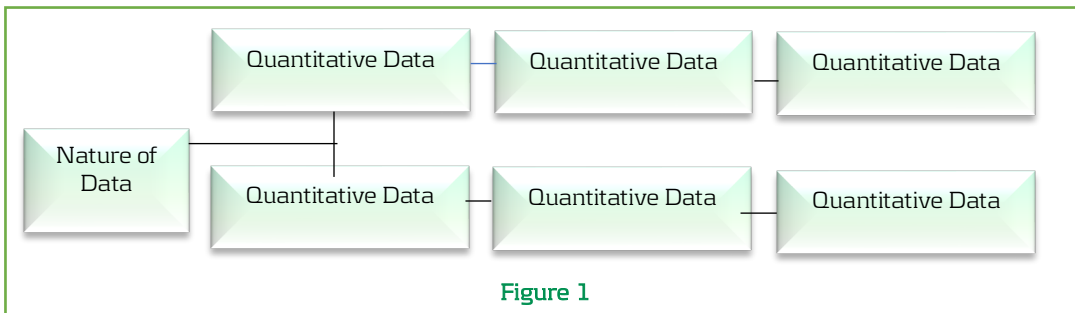
### Research Model

This is exploratory research and will be based on primary and secondary research and data collection. The research will use the methodologies of Balotna's Model to develop the framework and lead to the research findings (Rehman, Ashfaq, 2019).

Balotna's model will be used to determine the research's conclusion and outcomes. We will collect data from primary and secondary research, and the data will be analysed using computational models, and the results will be compared using the Balotna's model. This is not surprising because the pragmatic and organizational efforts necessary to collect data of sufficient reliability are substantial. To advance the construction of developmental computational models, we consider it crucial to the extent of the presently available knowledge base by providing data (Ashfaq, Asia, Rabia Ali, 2017).

## Methodology

The research will be based on qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data will be gathered through secondary research, including the literature, journals, and past research. At the same time, the quantitative research will be conducted through primary sources, including interviews and surveys. We will conduct interviews and surveys to collect primary data.



Ten children will be interviewed who are employed in different areas/factories/companies, and data will be collected through these sources. The children working in different small and medium-sized factories in Karachi will be interviewed for this research.

## Discussion and Analysis

### Key Findings of Quantitative Analysis

The research found that child labor is the major issue in Pakistan, and despite the steps and initiatives taken by the government, this issue was not resolved (Rehman, Ashfaq, 2019). Child labor is caused by many reasons, and the research found that most of the under-age workers belong to a single-parent family structure (Ashfaq, Asia, Rabia Ali, 2017), which is a subset of poverty and living life under the poverty line. Secondly, a family that is earning less than 500-8000 rupees per month are more likely to send their children to work, as compared to those families that are earning 18000 per month.

The average household size is six persons in Pakistan, and the basic wage rate of Pakistan is 18000 rupees. Hence this is the minimum amount required by an average household. Companies that are unable to meet their needs opt for child labor.

The other findings are that child labor is caused by reasons such as family size, lack of education, unemployment, personal desires. The role of government is rather weak in this area, and the solution is still vague (Ashfaq, Asia, Rabia Ali, 2017).

The role of government is crucial in eradicating child labor in the economy. First of all, the government should clearly state that child labor is illegal and unethical even if the family or the child himself is willing to work. Secondly, the government should partner with activist groups, trade unions, and NGOs to stop child labor and to limit companies from hiring children for work. The government and trade unions can play an integral role here. Moreover, the government can also provide subsidies to schools in villages and small

towns, so the schools can provide free education and learning facilities to the children. The villages and small towns should be the primary target because the child labor participation rates are higher in rural areas.

Furthermore, the government can place fines and permits on the companies that employ underage children for work. The penalties will be the greatest source of discouragement for the companies and factories, and they will be reluctant to employ children for work. Also, the government will have to implement strict regulations and laws for the eradication of child labor and should make it a law and a part of the constitution.

At the economic level, the government can also lower the wage rate so the cost of production for the companies will go down, and they will be able to recruit from the adult population. The main reason why firms hire children is that they are cheaper and more cost-effective, so if the wage rate declines, then the adult workers will be available for the cheaper pay as well. This way, the companies will shift to adult workers from child labor.

The government can also provide trainings to the people and adult workers so they can become more skilled as compared to children. This way, the adult population will be the better and more productive option for the companies, and they will opt for their recruitment.

### Key Findings of Qualitative Analysis

There are several ways through which government can curb child labor and can create socio-economic benefits. The role of government is also crucial in eradicating child labor.

### Causes of Poverty

The research found that government can provide basic necessities to the people such as food, shelter, and clothing to fulfill their basic physiological needs. So that even if they live below

poverty lines, they will have the basic necessities of life ([Fatima, 2017](#)).

Increasing family size in the lower-income group is a serious threat to socio-economic benefits, and the government should work on population control ([Ashfaq, Asia, Rabia Ali, 2017](#)). This is the major reason why child labor is rising in Pakistan. If the government creates controls for the population, then they can reduce the family size ([Iqbal, Zafar, Kausar, Asaad 2020](#)).

The families face different types of issues that lead to child labor ([Ashfaq, Asia, Rabia Ali, 2017](#)). It is essential that government provides extra support to those families that are going through difficult circumstances and periods ([Rehman, Ashfaq, 2019](#)).

The corruption in government departments is also creating child labor as the government officials do not pay attention to child labor and laws related to this social issue ([Iqbal, Zafar, Kausar, Asaad 2020](#)). The research study found that the government is neglecting the issues pertaining to child labor and corrupt labor ([Rehman, Ashfaq, 2019](#)).

## Role of Government

The local and federal governments can make a huge impact in reducing child labor in Pakistan. They can create awareness amongst the families on the adverse effects of child labor. They can promote education and welfare to avoid child labor. They can impose penalties on the companies that are hiring underage children for employment ([Amjad, Aisha, Abeeha, 2020](#)).

The government policies can play the role of a catalyst here. The Financial shocks create the need for child labor which can be eliminated by the policies made by government officials (Rekha, and Duggirala Vasanta, 2020). the government can provide unemployment benefits and poverty benefits to poor families to support large unemployed households. Thus the children will not have to work. The government policy of free education can be effective when the families have a stable income (Rekha, and Duggirala Vasanta, 2020).

However, the government has to be strict in its policies, and those who even deviate from the policy should be punished ([Amjad, Aisha, Abeeha, 2020](#)). Only, in that case, the policy will work. In some cases, the children will not be willing to go to school and will rather go to work if the situation of their family is not that good. This is an ideal situation, and the government and government offices need to make serious efforts in order to achieve this ideal situation. Otherwise, the problem of child labor will become an impossible

dilemma. Child labor is caused mainly by poverty, and poverty is caused by internal and external factors. The government does understand the issues and causes, and effects of child labor. However, the problem at hand is much bigger than how it is perceived (Rekha, and Duggirala Vasanta, 2020).

The other factors affecting child labor include the minority population who find it hard to get proper jobs in the skilled sector or proper education. The minority groups suffer alienation and elimination from society.

## Discussion

This research looks at two spectrums of child labor. The first dimension is that child labor has social issues and problems. In contrast, the other aspect of this research is what role the government is playing to address the issues of child labor. Child labor is an important social dilemma because it has religious significance as well. In 2005, there was an Islamic conference held in Morocco, and the conference gave the verdict of abolishing all harmful and immoral activities of the past, including child labor (Rekha, and Duggirala Vasanta, 2020). The conference declared child labor as an anti-social activity and rather encouraged education for both genders. In other words, to promote equality the conference also encouraged that education should be the responsibility of the government that is present in the country.

However, there are so many social issues that create the situation where the children are forced to work. Due to the family size and rising inflation, the children are sent to small shops and factories to work. Poverty in the country is increasing due to inflation. When inflation rises, the purchasing power declines, and the families that are already poor face more issues. So, they look for ways to earn more money (Rekha, and Duggirala Vasanta, 2020). in addition to this, Pakistan is a developing economy, and it needs an industrial revolution. The current level of industries is very low, which means the people are many unskilled hence they are involved in menial jobs and earn a low amount.

Poverty is the major reason for child labor. Poverty is sky-high in Pakistan, and it is increasing day by day ([Amjad, Aisha, Abeeha, 2020](#)). Child labor is directly proportional to the poverty levels, and the poverty itself is influenced by many internal and external factors (Rekha, and Duggirala Vasanta, 2020).

First of all, the families, in most cases, are not supportive. If the father is not earning any bread, then the wife and kids are working, which further

adds to the poverty. Secondly, the signal parent families are also increasing, and they are mostly unsupported, causing poverty levels to rise. Another important cause of poverty is an illness, where the savings are spent on the cure and hospital expenses, causing poverty and lack of money for daily expenses and food ([Amjad, Aisha, Abeeha, 2020](#)).

Lack of education and training is the major problem here. If the parents and family members are not educated or trained, they will not be able to get a proper skilled job, leading to a low level of income and poverty.

In the case of many Pakistani families, the family does not want to send their kids to school, as they prefer the inflows of money which are coming from different sources and different methods ([Amjad, Aisha, Abeeha, 2020](#)). This is why they send their kids to work in small and medium-size factories, mines, shops, and businesses. They do not see the benefits of education; all they reap is the benefit of their children working at different places or even homes. The short-term inflow of money is more beneficial for them as compared to the long-term benefits of education ([Janjua, A. A., & Awan, A. G, 2020](#)).

The government policies can play an integral role here in the case of Child labor. The government policies can play the role of a catalyst here. The financial shocks create the need for child labor which can be eliminated by the policies made by government officials. However, child awareness is also crucial. The government should inform the public how important education is and why they should abstain from shielding labor. In addition to this, the government can provide unemployment benefits and poverty benefits to poor families to support large unemployed households. Thus the children will not have to work ([Amjad, Aisha, Abeeha, 2020](#)). the government policy of free education can be effective when the families have a stable income coming from a fixed source ([Amjad, Aisha, Abeeha, 2020](#)).

However, there is another school of thought that says that the government can make education compulsory, and this can help in eliminating child labor. However, the government has to be strict in its policies, and those who even deviate from the policy should be punished. Only, in that case, the policy will work. In some cases, the children will not be willing to go to school and will rather go to work if the situation of their family is not that good. Poor families, poor kids, and everyone face the same issue at home; thus, the idea of making education compulsory will be effective in the limited scenario where the

government is determined on their stance, income is stable, inflation is low, and poverty is under control ([Janjua, A. A., & Awan, A. G, 2020](#)).

This is an ideal situation, and the government and government offices need to make serious efforts in order to achieve this ideal situation. Otherwise, the problem of child labor will become an impossible dilemma for the country and also for the government ([Amjad, Aisha, Abeeha, 2020](#)).

It is also crucial that the government can not implement anything unless the parents, children, and families support the government ([Janjua, A. A., & Awan, A. G, 2020](#)). So, the government needs the support of employers and employees, and their families before they can address the issues pertaining the child labor.

The government does understand the issues and causes, and effects of child labor. However, the problem at hand is much bigger than how it is perceived ([Janjua, A. A., & Awan, A. G, 2020](#)). thus, all stakeholders are supposed to collaborate and eradicate this issue from their local society and from Pakistan ([Anjum, Imran, 2020](#)).

The external factors affecting child labor include the minority population who find it hard to get proper jobs in the skilled sector or proper education. The minority groups suffer alienation and elimination from society. The strong peer groups and external influences also create poverty for those who do not have any social involvement. The socio-economic sadness and impact of HIV/AIDS also create such problems.

Child labor in Pakistan is rising mainly because of poverty and because of the fact that government does not give importance to education. The education budget in the country had never been great than 1.5 percent and 2 percent. This is the major and root cause of child labor. Child labor has social, mental, and physical consequences along with moral and psychological effects ([Anjum, Imran, 2020](#)). Research conducted in the year 1990 declared that over 11 million children are involved in child labor, and most of them are in dire need of basic necessities of life, as their household conditions are poor. Child labor is a form of exploitation, and International Labor Organization has abandoned child labor. In Pakistan, the highest number of children are involved in the textile sectors and agriculture sectors. In farming, many children are working in the cotton fields, where the age of an average child is 14 years. However, child labor is a global issue. by the year 2004, there were around 218 million children working as child laborers ([Anjum, Imran, 2020](#)).

According to the research, child labor is an issue in all four provinces of Pakistan. In Sindh, the

children are working in different sectors, and child labor is not limited to one district or city only. It is difficult to reduce child labor as small and medium-size factories are hiring children under the age of 14 and 15 years and are situated in different parts of the province. In addition to this, the government has been making policies to promote education since the year 2000, but there is no reduction in child labor ([Khan, Ayesha, Sonia Yousuf, and Sana Naqvi. 2020](#)).

In Punjab, children under the age of 10 years are also involved in the employment sector. The families are reluctant to send their kids to school and are interested in their employment. Many children are selling different products on the streets and not going to the schools. The reason is that the families need money which is definitely not coming from education.

The situation in Baluchistan and KPK is almost similar to the provinces of Sindh and Punjab. Child labor is a common problem for the local governments of KPK and Baluchistan as well. Baluchistan is facing this issue for an additional reason lack of economic development. Baluchistan is the poorest of all provinces, so the economic problems and poverty are greater than ever there, and the resistance for education is also higher. The quality of education can be improved, which will result in better standards of living and reduction in poverty, which can further lead to the reduction in child labor.

The role of government can be more impactful if the government follows the laws and the constitution of Pakistan. The laws pertaining to child labor say that companies are not allowed to recruit underage children, and child labor is illegal. Education is compulsory for children, and child labor should be abolished. However, the laws are not properly implemented, and people are not aware of the legislature ([Khan, Ayesha, Sonia Yousuf, and Sana Naqvi. 2020](#)).

The constitution of Pakistan also guides the government about child labor policies. In Pakistan, Article 11 (3) of the constitution of 1973 prohibits the service of children below the age of 14 years in hazardous employment. The research is limited to exploring various causes of child labor leading to delinquent behaviour prohibition under the constitution of Pakistan. In addition, it is also the responsibility of legislative agencies on this issue to save the trapped individuals from this social reality ([Khan, Ayesha, Sonia Yousuf, and Sana Naqvi. 2020](#)).

In Pakistan, especially Child domestic workers are deprived of all fundamental rights such as education, justice, freedom of choice, and constitutional rights as well. They are deprived of

the constitutional rights such as Articles 11, 18, 25A, 25(3) given in the Constitution of Pakistan. A household cannot possibly monitor the government and cannot bring labor laws against domestic works. Pakistan state acknowledges and prohibits forced labor, slavery, external trafficking, and wickedest practices of child labor only in the document, but has not been able to take any administrative measures to ban child labor and stop murders and brutal torture of innocent child laborers (Sinha, 2005).

## Recommendations

There are some recommendations to eradicate child labor through individual or collective effort.

1. Government should run campaigns to explain the harmful effects of child labor.
2. The government should provide sustainable income to those families that are unable to sustain themselves.
3. The government should make essential items (food, clothes, medicine) available for free.
4. Society must adhere to equality and justice.
5. The government officials and ministries should follow the child labor laws strictly.
6. The government can improve the quality of education which will result in better standards of living and reduction in poverty, which can further lead to the reduction in child labor.

## Conclusion

The youth is the integral stakeholder that is responsible for running the country and holds the future in their hands. According to the World Labor Organization, there are over 120 million children who work full-time in different companies, factories, farms, etc. ([Iqbal, Zafar, Kausar, Asaad 2020](#)), while 130 million kids work part-time. In Pakistan, child labor dates back to the tenor of Zia Ul Haq, who encouraged capitalism, and the new factories were in need of more labor. Child labor is the result of capitalism as children are cost-effective, which is why the capitalist hire children as laborers ([Ashfaq, Asia, Rabia Ali, 2017](#)).

The role of government is crucial in eradicating child labor in the economy. The government should partner with activist groups, trade unions, and NGOs to stop child labor. Government should promote education in villages and towns. The villages and small towns should be the primary target because the child labor participation rates are higher in rural areas. The officials can also target employers. The penalties will be the greatest source of discouragement for the companies and factories, and they will be

reluctant to employ children. The main reason why firms hire children is that they are cheaper and cost-effective, so the government can cut the wage rates too.

The research found that child labor is caused by reasons such as family size, lack of education, unemployment, personal desires. The role of government is rather weak in this area, and the solution is still vague. Most of the children are working at homes and are unpaid illiterate workers. There are many reasons for the growing child labor trend in Pakistan ([Iqbal, Zafar, Kausar, Asaad 2020](#)). Poor families send their kids to work in factories, farms, and mines, and as a result of this, the children lose their childhood. The working conditions create a negative impact on their minds, and this leads to psychological issues ([Ashfaq, Asia, Rabia Ali, 2017](#)). The findings of this mixed-method study concluded that there are various socio-economic reasons responsible for child labor.

It can be concluded that child labor in Pakistan is rising mainly because of poverty and because of the fact that government does not give importance to education. The education budget in the country had never been great than 1.5 percent and 2 percent. International Labor Organization has abandoned child labor. In Pakistan, the

highest number of children are involved in the textile sectors and agriculture sectors. However, child labor is a global issue. by the year 2004, there were around 218 million children working as child laborers ([Khan, Ayesha, Sonia Yousuf, and Sana Naqvi. 2020](#))

According to the research, child labor is an issue in all four provinces of Pakistan. in addition to this, the government has been making policies to promote education since the year 2000, but there has been no reduction in child labor. Education is compulsory for children, and child labor should be abolished. However, the laws are not properly implemented, and people are unaware of the legislature. Furthermore, the families are reluctant to send their kids to school and are interested in their employment. Many children are selling different products on the streets and not going to the schools. Child labor is connected to society's welfare and education. The quality of education can be improved, which will result in better standards of living and reduction in poverty, which can further lead to the reduction in child labor.

Moreover, the laws pertaining to child labor say that companies are not allowed to recruit underage children, and child labor is illegal ([Khan, Ayesha, Sonia Yousuf, and Sana Naqvi. 2020](#))

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## Appendix

### Interview Questions

1. What is your Name?
2. For how long you have been working?
3. What is your age?
4. How many people are there in your family
5. How many siblings do you have?
6. Tell us something about your parents?
7. Have you been to school? How many classes have you studied?
8. What is educational background of your siblings?
9. Do you want to study?
10. How much do you earn monthly?
11. Where are you working currently?
12. What is the main reason that you are working?
13. Do you like your workplace environment or you feel upset?
14. Have you ever felt unsafe while working?

### Interview Results

Interview conducted for Child Labour Study

Name of Worker	Work Experience	Age	Number of Family Members	Number of brothers and Sisters	Single Parent	Number of Earners at Home	Education	Do you want to study	Monthly Wage	Where are you working
Abdul		17	6	3	No	4	3 Class	Yes	8,000	Carpenter Shop
Munna	1	15	5	3	Yes	4	2 Class	Yes	12,000	Home
Fartian	3	16	8	5	No	6	4 Class	Yes	6,000	Laundry Shop
Danish	1	12	9	6	No	7	4 Class	Yes	5,000-7,500	Selling Flowers on Streets
Abid	6	19	6	3	No	6	3 Class	No	7,500	Carpenter Shop
Ai	5	17	5	3	No	5	5 Class	Yes	6,000	Mechanic Shop
Faris	2	15	11	8	No	8	2 Class	Yes	9,000	Home
Suleman	3	15	5	3	Yes	4	2 Class	Yes	6,000	Car Cleaning Service Shop
Abdul Rehman	2	13	8	4	No	6	1 Class	Yes	5,500	Local Hotel
Sutwan	9	18	7	3	No	5	2 Class	Yes	6,500	Local Hotel