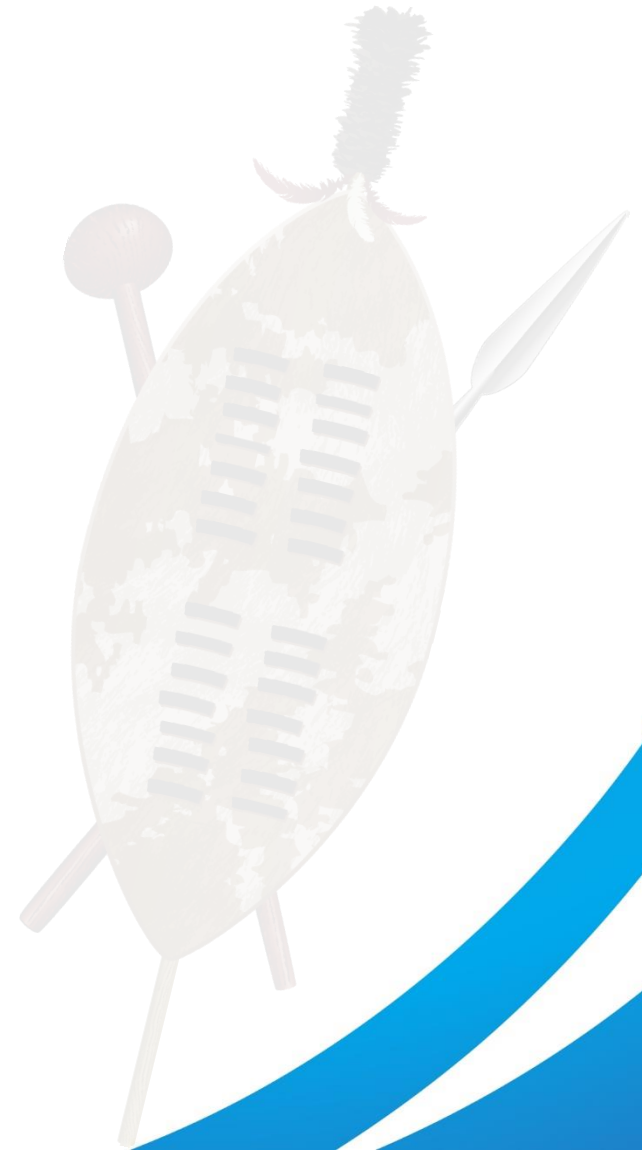


A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF MULTIPLE LABOR UNIONS AT THE WORKPLACE LEVEL ON THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND LABOR CONFLICT IN SOUTH KOREA

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1. Introduction

- ◎ Up until 2011, it was prohibited to establish multiple labor unions within any individual company in South Korea
- ◎ Under the Korean system, the concept of multiple labor unions is centered on whether each union has a solid body.
- ◎ The implementation of the multi-unionism brought a fair number of changes to the collective bargaining system.
- ◎ That is, a workplace with multiple unions needed to unify their bargaining channel first. The management could choose to exercise collective bargaining with each labor union. One of key purposes of the system of single bargaining channel was to reduce unnecessary negotiation costs and to stabilize industrial relations.

1. Introduction

- © In the United States and Europe, multi-unionism in a company generally means that each worker can choose to join one of the national level unions.
- © Nonetheless, organizational competition between the unions often occurs to obtain the exclusionary bargaining representation at each level, so eventually the competition tends to be dealt at the individual company level (Noh, 2010).
- © This research has investigated sixty-six cases of workplaces with multiple labor unions in South Korea and analyzed changes in the industrial relations since the implementation of multi-unionism

2. Background

© Rival Unionism

Pawlenko (2006) adduced Freeman's assertion (1986), "unions – like other institutions – need competition to keep them doing their best", and emphasized to reevaluate competition between the unions.

Metcalf, Wadsworth and Ingram (1993) indicated that a workplace with multi-unionism tended to have more strikes. Akkerman (2008) he detected that strikes tended to occur not due to the propaganda stratagem but due to the competition between the unions to secure their bargaining agenda

What these contradictory researches on multi-unionism and rival unionism tell us is that the industrial relations in each country are influenced differently by its own industrial environments and situations.

2. Background

© Strategy Choice

One of the most general models for industrial relations of the enterprise or workplace unit is strategic choice model suggested by Kochan, Katz and McKersie (1986).

The strategic choice theory indicates that the institutional level can be divided into strategic level, collective bargaining level and workplace level

The strategic choice model is one of the most crucial theories that explain why labor unions and users change their strategies.

After the implement of multi-unionism, they need at least two or three strategies, and each strategic choice forms various frameworks of cooperation and opposition between either the unions or labor and management.

2. Background

© Union Service

Union services may also be extended to the point where they encourage or provide opportunities for membership involvement. The presence of multiple unions in a workplace and the competition in the same category of membership might affect the provision of participation chances.

Flood, Turner & Willman (1996) described competitive multi-unionism as having more than one union with the same category of union member, distinguishing it from having various recruitment domain unions that co-exist.

Competitive multi-unionism could strengthen rivalry between unions to attract members, which would prompt the unions to examine and satisfy the needs of the workers and to enrich membership services

2. Background

© Industrial Relations Climate

Katz, Kochan and Gobeille (1983) used the term ‘industrial relations climate’ to illustrate the quality of relations between the labor and management within the organization, such as norms, behaviors and relationships among the members.

The industrial relations climate can be cooperative or oppositional, and it will influence the purpose and engagement of labor and management and the organizational consequences (Deery at al. 1999).

It can be used as an objective measurement tool not only to observe how labor and management adjust to the institutional alterations like the implementation of multi-unionism and any changes in the collective bargaining but also to evaluate how the consequences influence the relations.

3. method

© This study has interviewed 65 companies which have multiple labor unions.

Sector	No. of workplaces	No. of membership capability			Total No. of unions		
		Less than 300	300-1,000	More than 1,000	2	3	More than 4
Public	26 (41.5%)	1	3	18	15	5	6
Manufacturing	20 (31%)	4	9	7	14	3	4
Transportation	10 (15.4%)	5	2	3	4	3	3
Clerical & financial	4 (6.2%)	0	0	4	3	1	0
Cleaning service	2 (0.3%)	1	1	0	1	1	0
Others	3 (0.3%)	0	0	2	1	1	0
Total	65 (100%)	19 (29.2%)	18 (27.7%)	34 (52%)	38 (58%)	14 (22%)	13 (20%)

3. method

© Representatives from each company and labor union have been interviewed with structured interview questionnaires.

- 1) Circumstances in which multiple unions have been established
- 2) Changes in the number of members since the establishment
- 3) Presence of checks on and hindrances to the establishment from the company and/or the other unions
- 4) Types of collective bargaining
- 5) Changes in the industrial relations climate after the establishment

4. Results

© *Type of organizing*

	No. of workplaces	Sector						Workforce		
		Public	Manufac.	Transport.	Financ.	Cleaning service	Others	Less than 300	300-1000	More than 1,000
Separated	30 (46.1%)	5	12	10	1	1	1	9	10	12
Newly formed	1 (0.15%)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Occupational positions	17 (26.2%)	13	2	0	2	0	0	4	3	10
M & A	17 (26.2%)	8	6	0	1	1	1	2	3	12
Total	65 (100%)	26	20	10	4	2	3	15	16	34

4. Results

◎ Type of unifying single bargaining channel

Type of bargaining	Details	No. of work-place	Sector						Workforce		
			Public	Manufc.	Transpor.	Financ.	Cleaning service	Others	Less than 300	300 ~ 1000	More than 1000
Fractional bargaining		24	10	9	2	1	1	1	2	7	15
Joint bargaining		9	5	2	1	1	0	0	3	0	6
Majority representative	Single	26	10	6	6	2	1	1	8	8	10
	Coalition	5	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	2	3
	Total	31 (47.6%)	11	8	7	2	1	2	8	10	13
Joint bargaining (ordered by the Labor Committee)		1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

4. Results

© changes in the industrial relations climate

Industrial relations climate	No. of workplaces
Cooperation → Cooperation	27(41.5%)
Opposition → Cooperation	24(36.9%)
Opposition → Opposition	11(16.9%)
Cooperation → Opposition	3(4.6%)
Total	65(100%)

5. Conclusion

© *Implication*

Compared to the previous one labor and one management relations, the industrial relations under the system of multi-unionism creates more complicated and multilayered relationships among the unions or between labor and management.

The data show that the implementation of multi-unionism has been making gradual progress in the industrial relations in a more stable and cooperative way. However, it should be noted that it may be a phenomenon only on the surface.

One of the most meaningful aspects can be observed from the cases of those who were in the oppositional relations but have experienced change in the relations climate since the implementation of multi-unionism.

It shows that depending on the team works and leadership of unions can stabilize the industrial relations or cause disputes.

5. Conclusion

© *Limitation & Directions for policy makers*

There is a cognitive limit of the interviewees.

Also not all respondents have been able to state their views on industrial relations in depth. There is an interpretative limit of the interviewers. The data of this survey is on the basis of the written record by the interviewers.

Despite the limitation, this study has explored the developed model of industrial relations, which is more complicated and various due to multi-unionism.

