

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



# Winning Conditions of Precarious Workers' Struggles: A Reflection Based on Case Studies from South Korea

## Conditions gagnantes lors de luttes menées par des travailleurs précaires : réflexions à partir d'études de cas de la Corée du Sud

## Condiciones ganadoras en las luchas de los trabajadores precarios: una reflexión a partir de estudios de caso en Corea del Sur

Byoung-Hoon Lee et Sophia Seung-Yoon Lee

Volume 72, numéro 3, été 2017

Les nouvelles frontières de la relation d'emploi  
New Frontiers of the Employment Relationship

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1041096ar>  
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1041096ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)  
1703-8138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Lee, B.-H. & Lee, S. S. (2017). Winning Conditions of Precarious Workers' Struggles: A Reflection Based on Case Studies from South Korea. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 72(3), 524–550.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1041096ar>

### Résumé de l'article

En Corée du Sud, plusieurs luttes menées par des travailleurs précaires, qui cherchaient à s'organiser en syndicat et à s'engager dans des actions militantes afin de protester contre la discrimination inhumaine et l'exclusion illégale de la part de leurs employeurs, ont échoué dans l'atteinte des objectifs recherchés, à cause justement de leur statut d'emploi vulnérable et d'un manque de ressources. À la lumière de ces constats, notre étude cherche à examiner les conditions dans lesquelles de telles luttes sont susceptibles de conduire à des victoires, en mettant l'accent sur trois caractéristiques : la solidarité interne en milieu de travail à leur égard de la part des salariés réguliers, la solidarité externe manifestée par des groupements ouvriers et la société civile en dehors du milieu de travail, et, enfin, la mobilisation de répertoires de contestation. Plus particulièrement, cette étude cherche à identifier les configurations de ces trois conditions menant au succès des luttes des travailleurs précaires en termes de gains lors de négociations et de durabilité organisationnelle. Pour y parvenir, nous avons eu recours à une modélisation par analyse comparative qualitative de type ensemble flou (*fuzzy set*) afin d'étudier 30 cas majeurs de luttes de travailleurs atypiques qui se sont déroulées sur une période de 16 ans, soit de 1998 à 2013.

Selon notre analyse, la configuration susceptible de constituer une avenue significative pour le succès est conditionnelle à la présence des trois conditions mentionnées, soit une forte solidarité externe, une forte solidarité interne, et des répertoires de contestation en nombre réduit. Un tel résultat renforce l'idée que de solides ponts de solidarité, que ce soit avec des travailleurs qui ont un statut d'emploi différent dans le milieu de travail, ou avec des groupes de travailleurs ou la société civile extérieurs au milieu de travail, constituent des préalables cruciaux pour les travailleurs précaires désireux d'obtenir gain de cause. Un résultat inattendu, toutefois, est à l'effet que lorsque de telles luttes mobilisent un nombre restreint de répertoires de contestation, elles sont davantage susceptibles de mener à des gains en termes de négociation et d'organisation. Ainsi, notre étude apporte une contribution au développement de la théorie de la revitalisation du mouvement ouvrier face à la précarisation, en mettant en lumière le rôle de l'activisme chez les travailleurs précaires, en tenant compte du fait que la littérature anglaise qui se consacre au rôle actif de tels travailleurs atypiques dans l'organisation de contestations contre les traitements inhumains de la part d'employeurs et le régime de travail néolibéral demeure limitée.

Tous droits réservés © Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval, 2017

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

é  
rudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

# Winning Conditions of Precarious Workers' Struggles: A Reflection Based on Case Studies from South Korea

Byoung-Hoon Lee and Sophia Seung-Yoon Lee

**Our study explores the causal conditions that produce successful outcomes in precarious workers' struggles, in terms of bargaining gains and organizational sustainability, by focusing on internal solidarity from regular workers, external solidarity from labour and civil society groups outside the workplace, and protest repertoires mobilized. Employing the fuzzy-set QCA methodology to examine 30 major cases of non-regular workers' struggles from 1998 to 2013 reveals that strong solidarity building, whether with regular workers that have a different employment status in the segmented workplace, or with labour and civil society groups outside the workplace, is the crucial causal condition for precarious workers to achieve desired outcomes from struggles. Moreover, when their struggles mobilize fewer struggle repertoires, they are likely to achieve the successful outcomes of bargaining and organizational gains.**

**KEYWORDS:** precarious labour, non-regular workers, labour solidarity, protest repertoire, industrial relations, fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs/QCA).

## Introduction

In South Korea, non-regular employment has proliferated since the 1998 financial crisis. Many companies carried out unprecedented downsizing of regular employees *en masse* and began to adopt flexible employment relations by expanding the use of non-regular labour; this trend was encouraged by the government's neoliberal labour market reforms. The diffusion of a non-regular workforce<sup>1</sup> has resulted in the growing polarization of labour markets, because non-regular workers' employment conditions are quite inferior to those of regular workers in terms of wages, fringe benefits, and institutional protection.

Byoung-Hoon Lee, Professor, Department of Sociology, Seoul, Republic of Korea (bhlee@cau.ac.kr).

Sophia Seung-Yoon Lee, Professor, Department of Social Welfare, Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Republic of Korea (sophia.sy.lee@ewha.ac.kr).

This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2015S1A3A2046566).

During the post-1998 economic crisis period, some non-regular workers organized their own labour unions and engaged in protest actions against discriminatory treatment and precarious employment conditions. Their protest actions were largely triggered by employers' despotic behaviours, including forced wage cuts, unilateral termination of employment contracts, discriminatory and illegal employment practices, and violent suppression of unions. Non-regular workers' struggles are viewed as a new wave of labour insurgency in South Korea, symbolizing a revolt of the precariat class, a term coined by Standing (2011), against the neoliberal labour regime; these workers and their unions have shown militant activism to resist the labour market flexibilization that has victimized them.

Many of the precarious workers' struggles failed to achieve their intended outcomes, due to a lack of resources and employers' oppressive acts. Some of them, however, succeeded in achieving their demands and saw union membership increase through their protest actions. What leads to the difference between successful and unsuccessful precarious workers' struggles? This is our research question, which we aim to address by examining major cases of non-regular workers' struggles in South Korea. We examine the factors that help these precarious workers overcome tyrannical employers against the backdrop of the neoliberal capitalist state. Our study contributes to the theoretical elaboration of labour movement revitalization for the precariat class, which is likewise victimized under the neoliberal globalization regime, by shedding light on the activism of precarious workers and the conditions under which they achieve desired outcomes from their struggles. Literature in the English-speaking world has paid little attention to the active role of such atypical workers in staging various protests against employers' inhumane and discriminatory treatments against the background of a market-driven labour regime, although there is an emergent research interest in this subject in recent labour movement literature.

This study explores causal conditions of successful non-regular workers' struggles via abductive reasoning, which is a form of logical inference that moves from observations to a theory to account for the observations. In adopting the abductive approach, we employ the research method of fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fs/QCA) to examine middle-N cases. The fs/QCA is appropriate because of its emphasis on identifying conditions rather than variables. Hence, we apply this abductive approach toward theorizing key conditions for enabling precarious workers to win against employers, by drawing upon 30 cases of non-regular workers' struggles pertaining to the period between 1998 and 2012. Our focus is on three dimensions of precarious workers' struggles to provide a "grounded" explanation concerning the success of those struggles: 1- internal solidarity; 2- external solidarity; and 3- struggle repertoire.

## Contextual Understanding of Non-Regular Workers' Struggles in Korea

As South Korean firms began expanding their use of non-regular labour to replace regular employees during the 1998 economic crisis, the presence of precarious workers increased sharply (beginning in the late 1990s). In fact, the share of temporary and daily workers, as estimated by the *National Survey of Economically Active Population*, rose sharply from 41.8% in 1995 to 52.1% in 2000. According to the government's official estimates, based on the *Economically Active Population Supplementary Survey*, which has been conducted since 2001 to capture the size of the non-regular workforce and the related employment conditions, such atypical employment rose from 26.8% in 2001 to 37.0% in 2004, and has since declined to 32.5% as of 2015 (Korea Labor Institute, 2015). Non-regular workers, comprising nearly a third of the entire workforce, have faced discriminatory treatment and institutional exclusion—phenomena that are closely related to their precarious employment status. A substantial wage gap exists between regular and non-regular workers, and has been widening over the past 15 years. The average hourly wages of non-regular workers have fallen from 80.5% in 2001 to 65.0% in 2015, compared with that of regular workers (=100). Moreover, a majority of non-regular workers have been excluded from the statutory protection of social welfare (i.e. employment insurance, medical insurance, and national pensions) and labour standards (i.e. severance pay, overtime work pay, and paid vacations), as demonstrated in Table 1.

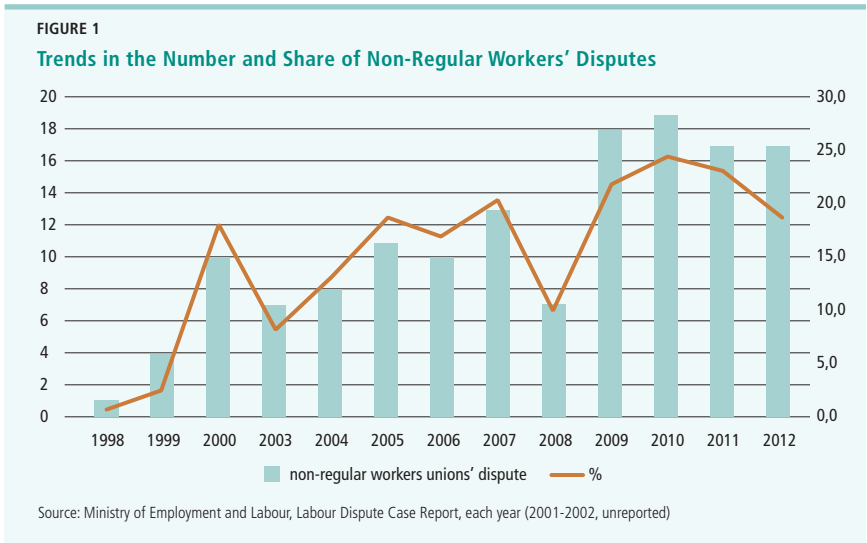
**TABLE 1**  
**Comparison of Social and Organizational Protection between Regular and Non-regular Workers**

|                       | Regular Workers |      | Non-regular Workers |      |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------|---------------------|------|
|                       | 2004            | 2015 | 2004                | 2015 |
| Employment Insurance  | 61.5            | 74.0 | 36.1                | 42.0 |
| Medical Insurance     | 73.8            | 84.8 | 40.1                | 43.8 |
| National Pension      | 72.5            | 82.0 | 37.5                | 36.9 |
| Severance Payment     | 67.4            | 84.0 | 31.3                | 40.5 |
| Overtime Work Payment | 55.8            | 58.4 | 22.2                | 23.7 |
| Paid Vacation         | 58.2            | 73.9 | 24.6                | 31.9 |
| Union Membership      | 16.7            | 16.9 | 5.2                 | 2.8  |

Source: KLI (2015)

Note: The data are collected from the Economically Active Population Supplementary Survey in August, each year.

Given the growing presence of the non-regular workforce and their discriminatory employment conditions, these precarious workers have organized unions and launched a variety of collective actions to protest against employers' unfair treatments since the 1998 crisis. During the post-1997 period, union organizing and protest actions by non-regular workers have steadily increased in various industrial sectors, such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, and service in both private and public sectors. Consequently, the relative share of their struggles in the total number of labour disputes has soared from 0.7% to over 20% over the same period, as shown in Figure 1.<sup>2</sup>



Non-regular workers' unions, however, are severely constrained by enterprise unionism, which is rooted in the traditional setting of South Korean enterprise-based industrial relations. Non-regular workers are often denied membership in existing unions, which represent only regular workers within the boundary of the enterprise. As a result, non-regular workers attempt to unionize themselves by organizing their independent unions. In the segmented workplace, the former group is primarily viewed as a buffer to guarantee job security and lower work burdens for the latter group (Lee and Frenkel, 2004). Problematically, non-regular workers are commonly faced with limited power resources, resulting from their precarious employment status and vulnerable working conditions, in contrast to regular workers, whose unions have sufficient organizational resources and entrenched bargaining power in labour-management relations at the enterprise level. Accordingly, when defending their union from the employer's harsh oppression, or mobilizing protest actions to press their claims, non-regular workers tend to engage in protracted struggles—often lasting longer than a hundred days—and

resort to an unconventional and high-risk struggle repertoire, which goes beyond the workplace, due to the constraint of their limited organizational resources (Lee, 2016). Under the disadvantageous context of enterprise-based industrial relations, it is difficult for non-regular workers' unions to maintain organizational sustainability, which is evidenced by the decline in union membership for these workers from 5.2% in 2004 to 2.8% in 2015, in contrast to regular workers' union membership, which has remained steady at a level of 16.7-16.9%.

## Literature Review

In response to the growing presence of atypical employment patterns in both Western advanced countries and non-Western developing countries, the English-language labour movement literature has recently paid closer attention to how labour unions react to the changing landscape of labour markets. Much research in the labour movement literature casts light on how labour unions formulate their policy stance toward precarious labour and launch organizing campaigns to recruit atypical workers. This research discusses the nature of challenges created by atypical labour for labour unions and highlights how those unions deal with such challenges by re-establishing their strategic approach toward precarious workforces in terms of labour market regulations, membership recruitment, and collective bargaining or organizational representation, whether from a macro perspective of cross-country comparison (Pulignano *et al.*, 2016; Kornelakis and Voskeritsian, 2016; Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011; Pernicka, 2005), or from a perspective of micro-level case studies (Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015; Simms and Dean, 2015; Conley and Stewart, 2008). Most of this literature focuses on how existing unions respond to atypical labour by treating this worker group as an object of union representation, but hardly pays attention to the new activism of precarious workers, who act as key agents to unionize themselves and mobilize their own protests at the margins of labour markets. Only a fraction of the recent labour movement literature delves into the active roles that precarious workers assume in their struggles: among them are Chun (2009), who highlights the symbolic leverage of precarious workers having weak structural power to strengthen their associational power by classification struggles and public drama in USA and South Korea, and Atzeni (2016), and Mattoni and Vogiatzoglou (2014), who commonly underscore collective interests or identification to mobilize precarious workers' self-activity in a bottom-up approach. In light of this, our study will address a research gap by exploring the conditions under which precarious workers, as key agents of new labour movements, succeed in accomplishing demands and organizing unions through their collective action.

As Rodgers and Rodgers (1989) indicate, precarious workers, equated with non-regular workers in South Korea, are typically characterized as having in-

secure low-income jobs, as experiencing a lack of control over working conditions, and being excluded from legal and organizational protection. Given such vulnerable employment conditions, it is very difficult for those precarious workers to organize their own unions and mobilize collective action against employers, in contrast to regular workers who are guaranteed job security and an institutionalized voice in the workplace. Precarious workers tend to be hesitant to join unions and participate in union-led action, because of their insecure employment status and fear of job loss. Additionally, the unionization of precarious workers is often confronted with employers' determined opposition, which is closely linked with their primary motivation to use non-regular labour to avoid the organizing and expansion of labour unions in the workplace. Because of their disposable employment status and fragile collectivity, precarious workers are likely to lack both associational and structural power<sup>3</sup> at the workplace level, and suffer disadvantageous conditions with which to cope with employers' determined repressions, even when they succeed in organizing a union (Lee, 2016).

Precarious workers who are involved in a contentious situation with their employers require particular conditions that enable their protest actions to succeed in overcoming their precariousness and fulfilling their demands, thereby producing "the paradox of power."<sup>4</sup> Since precarious workers lack power resources from within their unions to deal with employers' repressive reaction, it is important for them to build solidarity networks externally and mobilize effective protest tactics with their limited action resources, in order to pressure employers to recognize their unions and accept their demands. As Frege and Kelly (2003) underscore, coalition building with other social movements becomes a key union revitalization strategy for overcoming the crisis of union movements; solidarity networking is a necessary condition for precarious workers to organize a union and mobilize protest actions against their employer's repression, while lacking sufficient power resources. In addition, the protest repertoires devised and employed in struggles of precarious workers with limited action resources are significant for their success.

Solidarity networking is conceptualized as building a community of common interests, common feelings, and joint actions (D'Art and Turner, 2002). Indeed, solidarity between regular and non-regular workers, who have different interests and feelings in the segmented workplace, could be a crucial condition in helping the latter group make gains in conflicts with an employer. The regular workers' union, which has an established position within the workplace and possesses sufficient power resources, can offer material and emotional support to the precarious workers' struggle, which is restrained by poor action resources, and mobilize joint action to pressure the employer to address the latter's protest. Solidarity networking with community and civil society movements outside the workplace could be another significant source of union power for precarious

workers. Precarious workers' claims are largely aimed at employers' arbitrary dismissals, inhumane working conditions, and illegal treatments, including union suppression. Thus, the precarious workers' struggle to defend their basic well-being and labour rights is often viewed as a public drama (Chun, 2009), with a societal effect that resonates to create public concern over employers' injustice imposed on those marginal workers. Accordingly, when precarious workers get involved in a contentious situation with an employer, solidarity support from labour and civil society organizations plays a key part in making up for the lack of power resources, and public opinion that sympathizes with their protest becomes a powerful ally to push the employer into correcting unjust treatments against those workers.

The choice of struggle repertoire or protest tactics also affects the outcome of the precarious workers' struggle. A new repertoire of collective actions, extending beyond the boundary of the workplace and appealing to the public, has become increasingly important to the precarious workforce.<sup>5</sup> McAdam and his colleagues (2001) differentiate between the contained and transgressive forms of protest repertoire; the former refers to collective action in which protesting actors employ well-established means of claim making, while the latter refers to protest action in which newly self-identified actors adopt an innovative repertoire. McAdam (1986) also distinguishes protest action between low-risk/cost and high-risk/cost types.<sup>6</sup> In this light of theoretical distinction concerning protest repertoires, precarious workers tend to devise and mobilize a variety of transgressive and, sometimes, high-risk protest repertoires to overcome employers' repressive actions and attract public attention under a disadvantageous power imbalance. This is in contrast with the regular workers' unions, which can achieve their claims by resorting to conventional and contained struggle repertoires in an institutionalized setting of labour-management relations (Lee, 2016; Lee, 2015).

In summary, internal solidarity (with regular workers), external solidarity (with community and civil society movements), and the strategic choice of protest repertoires are presumed as key conditions in producing successful outcomes for precarious workers' struggles, which are constrained by meagre power resources, against employers' repressive domination in the context of the neoliberal labour market regime. These three conditions—internal solidarity, external networking, and protest repertoires—are highlighted as the key elements of unions' strategic capacity in the union power model, elaborated by Lévesque and Murray (2010), and Ganz (2000).

## Research Methodology

### Collection and Calibration of Data

Our analysis examines 30 cases of non-regular workers' struggles, which were collected as follows:



1. We reviewed all labour disputes taking place between 1998 and 2012, which were reported in the *Labor Dispute Case Report*, published annually by the Ministry of Employment and Labor. The total number of non-regular workers' struggle cases is 142, including 13 cases of joint struggles by regular and non-regular workers. Additionally, we included 12 cases of struggles by dependent self-employed workers, which were ignored by the Ministry of Employment and Labor, as those workers were not recognized as wage workers under the labour laws.
2. We collected relevant information concerning the 154 cases of non-regular workers' dispute actions. Data concerning dispute actions taken by non-regular workers unions during the post-1997 period drew on documentary information concerning such contentious events provided by three South Korean labour journals (i.e. *the Daily Labor News*, *Non-Regular Labor*, and *Labor and Society*), activity reports of these unions, and written records of non-regular workers' struggles, including activists' memoirs, and academic papers, in addition to the *Labor Dispute Case Report*. Useful information for the fact-based analysis of non-regular workers' struggles was gathered from the meticulous review of those documentary data, which were largely derived from secondary sources.
3. Among the 154 cases, 30 cases were finally selected for our analysis. The selection was influenced by the availability of detailed case information required for our analysis to examine key conditions and outcomes of non-regular workers' struggles. Cases that documentary sources covered in detail are salient in that they had a significant effect on industrial relations and labour movements and attracted public attention in South Korea.<sup>7</sup> The selected cases are diverse in terms of involved employment types and industrial sectors, although the contracted employment and manufacturing sectors have the largest share in each category.<sup>8</sup>

Once the 30 cases were chosen, data calibration of those cases was carried out along the following five dimensions:

1. Internal solidarity is measured by a 3-point scale (0-2), reflecting the extent of solidarity support extended by regular workers' unions to non-regular workers' struggles within the same workplace. When the regular workers' union provided a high level of support (i.e. joint action, financial aid, and organizational assistance) to non-regular workers, a score of "2" was assigned. When the regular workers' union interfered with and obstructed the non-regular workers' protest action, a score of "0" was coded. When the regular workers' union showed an indifferent attitude toward the non-regular workers' protest, avoiding any involvement in the contentious event, or when no regular workers' union existed, a score of "1" was assigned to this dimension.
2. External solidarity denotes solidarity support that labour organizations (i.e. regional or industrial units of the union federation, and other local unions) and civil society groups, including community activists and netizens, offered to non-

regular workers' struggles. This dimension is measured by a 3-point scale gauging the degree of solidarity assistance provided by those outside groups to the non-regular workers' protest action. A score of "2" is equated with strong external solidarity, implying that labour and civil-society organizations consistently supplied active assistance to non-regular workers' struggles during the contentious event. By contrast, no solidarity support from outside is scored as "0". When non-regular workers' protest action received external solidarity support, but to a limited extent and for a limited time-period, we considered such cases to involve weak external solidarity, and thus assigned these cases a score of "1."

3. To examine protest repertoire, we reviewed all kinds of actions mobilized by non-regular workers in their contentious events with employers. Their various action repertoires fall into the following categories: 1-strike action; 2- blockade, entry attack, and boycott demonstrations at the entrance of the workplace; 3- hunger and/or hair-shaving protest; 4- workplace occupation protest; 5- aerial protest (i.e. on a river bridge, city hall roof, tower crane, plant chimney, railway tower, or TV tower); 6- street campaigns, including one-man picketing, street demonstrations, candlelight rallies, street sit-down protests, signature collection campaigns, and three-step one-bow parades; 7- suicide protests; and 8- other manifestations (i.e. overseas expedition protests, river raft demonstrations, nationwide tour protests, and CEO interview protests). To examine the effect of non-regular workers' action repertoires on their struggle outcomes, we counted the total number of mobilized protest repertoires, ranging from two to seven.<sup>9</sup>
4. Bargaining gains are measured on a 3-point scale, assessing the extent to which non-regular workers achieved what they claimed in their struggles. Claims made by non-regular workers in the 30 struggle cases cover diverse issues, such as cancellation of dismissal and outsourcing, conversion of employment status into regular jobs, prevention of discriminatory treatment, guarantee of worker status and union activities, and enhancement of working conditions and occupational safety. Where non-regular workers achieved all or most of their claims, this dimension was coded as "2". Where they made no gain or a very limited gain, a score of "0" was assigned. When only a portion of their claims was achieved, a score of "1" (partial gain) was coded.
5. Organizational gains are measured by a 3-point scale assessing how union membership changed after non-regular workers' struggles ended. If the non-regular worker union membership remained intact, or increased after their struggle, this dimension was assigned a score of "2." When the union dissolved after the contentious event, a score of "0" was assigned. The cases in which the union experienced a reduction in its membership were assigned a score of "1."

Recognizing that our calibration of five dimensions could be subject to the bias of a single reviewer, we asked a third-party researcher, who has a good knowledge of non-regular workers' struggles in South Korea, to review our documentary

data relating to those 30 cases and independently assess the five dimensions in accordance with our scoring scale. The result of this double-checking affirmed that our calibration has no crucial problems in terms of methodological reliability and validity.<sup>10</sup> Table 2 summarizes our measurement of the five dimensions and how the 30 cases are distributed in each dimension.

| TABLE 2  |       |              |   |
|--|-------|--------------|---|
| Calibration and Case Distribution of Five Dimensions |       |              |   |
|  | Score | No. of Cases | Measurement   |
| Internal Solidarity                                  | 0     | 18           | Obstructive interference by regular workers' union  |
|  | 1     | 6            | Regular workers' indifference or no regular workers' union  |
|  | 2     | 6            | Strong solidarity support from regular workers' union   |
| External Solidarity                                  | 0     | 4            | No solidarity support from outside  |
|  | 1     | 6            | Weak solidarity support from outside  |
|  | 2     | 20           | Strong solidarity support from outside  |
| Number of Struggle Repertoire Items                  | 2     | 8            | The total number of the mobilized repertoire items among the following protest tactics: (1) strike action, (2) blockade, entry attack, and boycott demonstration, (3) hunger and/or hair-shaving protest, (4) workplace occupation protest, (5) aerial protest, (6) street campaigns, (7) suicide protest, (8) others |
|  | 3     | 5            |   |
|  | 4     | 7            |   |
|  | 5     | 5            |   |
|  | 6     | 4            |   |
|  | 7     | 1            |   |
| Bargaining Gains                                     | 0     | 10           | Little gain   |
|  | 1     | 11           | Partial gains   |
|  | 2     | 9            | Full gains  |
| Organizational Gains                                 | 0     | 6            | Union dissolved   |
|  | 1     | 14           | Union membership reduced  |
|  | 2     | 10           | Union membership sustained or increased   |
| Total  |       | 30           |   |

Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) has proven advantages in building causal inference from middle-N case-oriented analysis, with the inferential logic of Boolean algebra (Ragin, 1987). Although many features of QCA are similar to qualitative analysis, this method can generate possible hypotheses via causal inference with a set-theoretic approach. QCA was developed further into fuzzy-set QCA (Ragin, 2000) by incorporating the notion of calibration, which increases its precision in measuring concepts, conditions, and other case-related phenomena.

This fuzzy-set analysis has several unique features that differ from variable-oriented analysis. First, more degrees of freedom are provided to the researcher to examine “causal complexities” under the rubric of “multiple conjunctural causation” (Ragin, 1987: 20). The fundamental logic of this case-oriented comparative analysis rests on examining cases configurationally and focusing on theorizing contextualized understanding. The advantage of fuzzy-set analysis is that each case is considered as a whole and not disaggregated into variables, because it emphasizes cases rather than variables. Secondly, fuzzy-set analysis allows for a degree of flexibility in the way a case is examined. Cases are presumed to be sets, measuring particular characteristics or conditions. In simple set theory, a case would be definitively assigned to one set or another, while fuzzy-set logic employs degrees of membership. Set membership is determined by the researcher, who defines qualitative breakpoints of 1 (fully in) and 0 (fully out), with a scaling of membership scores between 0 and 1 to allow for partial membership. This calibration permits the researcher to compare the subject dimensions quantitatively. Accordingly, fuzzy-set analysis guarantees the usefulness of careful calibration, which offers the possibility of quantitative comparison, while appropriately reflecting the normal process of qualitative comparative analysis. Thirdly, fuzzy-set analysis provides a joint causal mechanism that allows for the examination of any interaction effect among the causal conditions of cases. Fuzzy-set analysis and conventional quantitative methods, like regression analysis, are different in their approaches to causal analysis. While regression analysis may be more appropriate for discovering the “effect of the cause,” fuzzy-set analysis is useful in examining the “cause of the effect,” recognizing that there could be different causes for the same outcome. As such, the fs/QCA method allows researchers to hypothesize that different conditional configurations may lead to similar consequences (Lee, 2013).

For the assessment of necessary conditions, QCA's strategy is to examine cases that share a given outcome and attempt to identify common causal conditions for those cases. This is an examination of whether instances of a specific outcome constitute a subset of instances of a causal condition. In this way, fs/QCA helps researchers identify causal conditions shared by cases that have the same outcome. The other strategy is to examine cases that share a specific causal condition or, more commonly, a specific combination of causal conditions, and assess whether these cases exhibit the same outcome (Ragin, 2008). When cases that have the same causal conditions share the same outcome, the causal conditions are deemed sufficient conditions or combinations of conditions.

Two methodological indicators are used in assessing the results of fuzzy-set analysis. Set-theoretic *consistency* captures the degree to which cases that share

a given combination of conditions produce the outcome in question. Consistency indicates how closely a perfect subset relation is approximated. Like statistical significance, it signals whether and to what extent an empirical connection between causal conditions and outcome(s) is methodologically valid. Ragin (2008) suggests that consistency scores should be close to 1.0 (perfect consistency); when consistency scores are below 0.75, it is difficult to maintain that a set relation exists. Set-theoretic coverage, by contrast, assesses the degree to which a cause or causal combination can explain the instances of an outcome. Thus, coverage gauges the empirical relevance or importance of causal combination. Coverage, like strength, represents the empirical relevance or importance of a set-theoretic connection (Ragin, 2008). Although there is no consensus on the minimum or ideal level of coverage rate, many studies that employ the fs/QCA method view results with a coverage of over 0.3 as empirically relevant.

Drawing upon 30 cases of non-regular workers’ struggles, fs/QCA is employed to assess whether there is a set-theoretical connection between three causal conditions (i.e. internal solidarity, external solidarity, and struggle repertoire), and two struggle outcomes (i.e. bargaining and organizational gains).

Results of fs/QCA

For fuzzy-set analysis, the measured score of the conditions and outcomes for each case is converted into a fuzzy membership score. Four of the dimensions have a range of scores from 0 to 2, and the “struggle repertoire” dimension has a range from 2 to 7. Three points are required to calibrate for fuzzy-set analysis: a cut-off point for “fully in” the set, a cut-off point for “fully out” of the set, and the crossover point, as displayed in Table 3. The cut-off point for “fully in” is the minimum value in the range for each condition, and “fully out” is the maximum value. The crossover point, which means “neither in the set nor out of the set,” is the median value within the range.

| TABLE 3<br>Calibration and Membership Scores for Five Dimensions |                     |                     |                     |                  |                      |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Membership score   | Internal solidarity | External solidarity | Struggle repertoire | Bargaining gains | Organizational gains |
| Fully in (1)   | 2                   | 2                   | 7                   | 2                | 2                    |
| Crossover (0.5)  | 1                   | 1                   | 4.5                 | 1                | 1                    |
| Fully out (0)  | 0                   | 0                   | 2                   | 0                | 0                    |

Based on the calibration rule noted above, fuzzy-set scores for the five dimensions of the 30 cases are presented in Table 4.

**TABLE 4**  
**Fuzzy-set Scores of Five Dimensions for 30 Struggle Cases**

|   | Internal solidarity | External solidarity | Struggle repertoire | Bargaining gains | Organizational gains | Case attributes         |               |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
|   |                     |                     |                     |                  |                      | Employment Type         | Industry      |
| Remicon                                     | 0.00                | 0.50                | 1.00                | 0.00             | 0.50                 | dependent self-employed | construction  |
| Korea Telecomm                              | 0.50                | 0.00                | 0.86                | 0.00             | 0.00                 | temporary               | service       |
| Carrier Kwangju plant                       | 0.00                | 0.00                | 0.65                | 0.50             | 0.00                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing |
| Kia Motor Kwangju plant                     | 1.00                | 1.00                | 0.00                | 1.00             | 1.00                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing |
| Korea Workers Compensation Welfare Service  | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.35                | 0.50             | 0.50                 | temporary               | public        |
| Hyundai Heavy Industry                      | 0.00                | 0.50                | 0.14                | 0.00             | 0.50                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing |
| Seoul University Hospital Care              | 1.00                | 1.00                | 0.00                | 1.00             | 1.00                 | dependent self-employed | public        |
| Keumho Tire                                 | 1.00                | 1.00                | 0.00                | 1.00             | 1.00                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing |
| Pohang Plant Construction                   | 0.00                | 0.50                | 0.35                | 0.50             | 0.50                 | daily on-call           | construction  |
| Ulsan Plant Construction                    | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.14                | 1.00             | 1.00                 | daily on-call           | construction  |
| Human Resource Development Service of Korea | 1.00                | 0.50                | 0.00                | 0.50             | 1.00                 | temporary               | public        |
| GM Daewoo Changwon plant                    | 0.00                | 0.00                | 0.35                | 0.00             | 0.05                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing |
| Dump trucks                                 | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.00                | 1.00             | 1.00                 | dependent self-employed | construction  |
| Hynix Magner Chips                          | 0.50                | 1.00                | 0.65                | 0.00             | 0.00                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing |
| Hyundai Hysco                               | 0.50                | 1.00                | 0.00                | 1.00             | 1.00                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing |

TABLE 4 (suite)  
Fuzzy-set Scores of Five Dimensions for 30 Struggle Cases

|                            | Internal solidarity | External solidarity | Struggle repertoire | Bargaining gains | Organizational gains | Case attributes         |                |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
|                            |                     |                     |                     |                  |                      | Employment Type         | Industry       |
| Kia Motor Hwasung plant    | 0.50                | 1.00                | 0.14                | 1.00             | 1.00                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing  |
| KTX attendants             | 0.50                | 1.00                | 0.65                | 0.00             | 0.00                 | subcontracted           | transportation |
| Donghee Auto               | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.00                | 0.50             | 0.50                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing  |
| Coscom                     | 0.00                | 0.50                | 0.35                | 1.00             | 0.00                 | dispatched              | service        |
| New Core                   | 1.00                | 1.00                | 0.86                | 0.00             | 0.50                 | temporary               | service        |
| E land                     | 1.00                | 1.00                | 0.86                | 0.50             | 0.50                 | temporary               | service        |
| Kiriyung Electronics       | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.86                | 0.50             | 0.50                 | dispatched              | manufacturing  |
| GM Daewoo Bupyeong plant   | 0.00                | 0.50                | 0.00                | 0.00             | 0.50                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing  |
| Cargo Truckers             | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.35                | 0.50             | 1.00                 | dependent self-employed | transportation |
| Hyundai Mipo Ship-building | 0.00                | 0.00                | 0.35                | 0.00             | 0.50                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing  |
| 88CC Caddies               | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.14                | 0.00             | 0.50                 | dependent self-employed | service        |
| Jaeneung Education         | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.35                | 0.50             | 0.50                 | dependent self-employed | service        |
| Hyundai Motor Ulsan plant  | 0.50                | 1.00                | 0.65                | 0.50             | 0.50                 | subcontracted           | manufacturing  |
| Hongik University Janitors | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.14                | 1.00             | 1.00                 | subcontracted           | service        |
| Samsung Electronic Service | 0.00                | 1.00                | 0.65                | 0.50             | 0.50                 | subcontracted           | service        |

In this study, we carry out the standard fuzzy-set analysis by using fs/QCA software (version 2.5), developed by Ragin and Davey (2014), and the *intermediate solution* is adopted for producing result configurations.<sup>11</sup> Conditional configurations, having no relevant case, are excluded from the analysis. If the conditional configuration has a value of consistency higher than 0.75, the outcome is coded as “1”; if not, the outcome is coded as “0.” The result configurations that have coverage higher than 0.3 and consistency over 0.75 are accepted as significant causal conditions.

**Bargaining Gains**

In examining the causal configuration for successful bargaining gains, nine cases are identified as being *successful* in terms of bargaining gains, with membership scores of over 0.5.<sup>12</sup> Employing fuzzy-set analysis with three conditions, Y (bargaining gain) = X (internal solidarity, external solidarity, number of struggle repertoire), the analysis presents the *truth table* for “bargaining gains” in Table 5. A truth table is a tool for identifying explicit associations between combinations of causal conditions and outcomes, by listing all logically possible combinations of causal conditions and the empirical outcomes associated with each configuration (Ragin, 2008). Here, eight (i.e.  $2^3$ ) logically possible combinations of conditions (causal configurations) and outcomes (bargaining gains) are listed on the truth table. Because the truth table presents only cases either “in the set (1)” or “out of the set (0),” the cases with causal conditions having a membership score of 0.5, which means neither “in the set” nor “out of the set,” are excluded. Consequently, 18 cases are observed in the truth table (Table 5).

Only one causal configuration has a consistency value higher than 0.75 (coded as 1), meaning that the configuration constitutes the sufficient condition for

**TABLE 5**  
**Truth Table for Bargaining Gains**

|   | Internal solidarity | External solidarity | Number of repertoires | Number of cases | Bargaining gains |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 | 1                   | 1                   | 0                     | 3               | 1                |
| 2 | 0                   | 1                   | 0                     | 8               | 0                |
| 3 | 0                   | 1                   | 1                     | 2               | 0                |
| 4 | 0                   | 0                   | 1                     | 1               | 0                |
| 5 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                     | 2               | 0                |
| 6 | 1                   | 1                   | 1                     | 2               | 0                |
| 7 | 1                   | 0                   | 0                     | 0               | -                |
| 8 | 1                   | 0                   | 1                     | 0               | -                |



bargaining gains. This configuration of three conditions led to successful bargaining gains in non-regular workers’ struggles, whereas the other combinations did not (bargaining gains = 0). The significant causal configuration that enables non-regular workers’ struggles to achieve bargaining gains is the combination of strong external solidarity and strong internal solidarity, with fewer protest repertoire items. This is observed in three cases (Kia Motor Kwangju plant, Keumho Tire, Seoul University Hospital Care), in that the configuration has a coverage higher than 0.3 and consistency over 0.75, as illustrated in Equation 1:

1- strong external solidarity \* strong internal solidarity \* fewer repertoires = bargaining gains (consistency: 0.895928, coverage: 0.408248).

This implies that only when non-regular workers’ struggles obtain strong solidarity support from regular workers (internal solidarity) and from outside (external solidarity), and when fewer protest repertoires are mobilized, they are likely to achieve successful bargaining gains. It is an unexpected finding that fewer protest repertoires is a key factor of the conditional configuration for success. The combined effect of strong internal solidarity and strong external solidarity is as expected.

Organizational Gains

We also examine what configuration of the three conditions leads to successful organizational outcomes, focusing on how union membership changes in the process of non-regular workers’ struggles. Ten cases are identified as achieving success in terms of organizational gains with a membership score of more than 0.5.<sup>13</sup> Applying fs/QCA with the three conditions, Y (organizational gains) = X (internal solidarity, external solidarity, the number of struggle repertoires), produces the truth table for “organizational gains,” demonstrating that 18 cases are relevant in this analysis, as displayed in Table 6.

| TABLE 6<br>Truth Table for Organizational Gains |                     |                     |                       |                 |                      |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
|   | Internal solidarity | External solidarity | Number of repertoires | Number of cases | Organizational gains |
| 1   | 1                   | 1                   | 0                     | 3               | 1                    |
| 2   | 0                   | 1                   | 0                     | 8               | 1                    |
| 3   | 0                   | 1                   | 1                     | 2               | 0                    |
| 4   | 0                   | 0                   | 0                     | 2               | 0                    |
| 5   | 1                   | 1                   | 1                     | 2               | 0                    |
| 6   | 1                   | 0                   | 1                     | 1               | 0                    |
| 7   | 0                   | 0                   | 0                     | 0               | -                    |
| 8   | 1                   | 0                   | 1                     | 0               | -                    |

Two configurations (i.e. strong internal solidarity \* strong external solidarity \* fewer struggle repertoires and strong external solidarity \* fewer struggle repertoires) are found to be causal conditional combinations for successful organizational gains. Fs/QCA, however, reveals that the former configuration (i.e. strong internal solidarity \* strong external solidarity \* fewer struggle repertoires) fails to reach a valid level of consistency and coverage, so we cannot accept this as a sufficient conditional configuration for organizational gains. By contrast, the latter configuration (i.e. strong external solidarity \* fewer struggle repertoires), observed in one case (i.e. Cargo Truckers), is a sufficient conditional configuration for successful organizational gains in non-regular workers' struggles, because it has both coverage (0.803572) and consistency (0.862069) above the cut off levels, as illustrated in Equation 2:

2- strong external solidarity \* fewer repertoires = organizational gains (consistency: 0.862069, coverage: 0.803572).

Accordingly, the causal configuration for successful organizational gains consists of strong external solidarity and fewer struggle repertoires. Strong external solidarity is found to be an important condition for enabling non-

TABLE 7

## Fuzzy-set Scores of Combined Outcomes for 30 Struggle Cases

|   | Bargaining AND<br>Organizational gains |                            | Bargaining AND<br>Organizational gains |
|---|--|----------------------------|--|
| Remicon                                     | 0.00                                   | Kia Motor Hwasung plant    | 1.00                                   |
| Korea Telecomm                              | 0.00                                   | KTX attendants             | 0.00                                   |
| Carrier Kwangju plant                       | 0.00                                   | Donghee Auto               | 0.50                                   |
| Kia Motor Kwangju plant                     | 1.00                                   | Coscom                     | 0.00                                   |
| Korea Workers Compensation Welfare Service  | 0.50                                   | New Core                   | 0.00                                   |
| Hyundai Heavy Industry                      | 0.00                                   | E land                     | 0.50                                   |
| Seoul University Hospital Care workers      | 1.00                                   | Kiryung Electronics        | 0.50                                   |
| Keumho Tire                                 | 1.00                                   | GM Daewoo Bupyeong plant   | 0.00                                   |
| Pohang Plant Construction                   | 0.50                                   | Cargo Truckers             | 0.50                                   |
| Ulsan Plant Construction                    | 1.00                                   | Hyundai Mipo Ship-building | 0.00                                   |
| Human Resource Development Service of Korea | 0.50                                   | 88CC Caddies               | 0.00                                   |
| GM Daewoo Changwon plant                    | 0.00                                   | Jaeneung Education         | 0.50                                   |
| Dump truckers                               | 1.00                                   | Hyundai Motor Ulsan plant  | 0.50                                   |
| Hynix Magnier Chips                         | 0.00                                   | Hongik University Janitors | 1.00                                   |
| Hyundai Hysco                               | 1.00                                   | Samsung Electronic Service | 0.50                                   |

regular workers’ struggles to sustain or increase union membership; this is true, however, only when fewer protest repertoires are mobilized. Remarkably, having fewer repertoires mobilized by non-regular workers’ struggles is clearly associated with unions’ organizational gains when combined with strong external solidarity.

Combination of Bargaining and Organizational Gains

Next, we examine the causal configuration that explains the combined outcome of both bargaining and organizational gains. Table 7 presents the fuzzy-set score of each case for bargaining *AND* organizational gains.<sup>14</sup>

Eight cases are identified as being successful in terms of bargaining *AND* organizational gains with membership scores above 0.5.<sup>15</sup> Our fuzzy-set analysis with the three concerned conditions, Y (bargaining gain *AND* organizational gain) = X (internal solidarity, external solidarity, struggle repertoires), results in the truth table for “bargaining *AND* organizational gains,” as displayed in Table 8.

TABLE 8

Truth Table for the Combined Outcome, Bargaining *AND* Organizational Gains

|   | Internal solidarity | External solidarity | Number of repertoires | Number of cases | Bargaining <i>AND</i> Organization gains |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--|
| 1 | 1                   | 1                   | 0                     | 3               | 1  |
| 2 | 0                   | 1                   | 0                     | 8               | 0  |
| 3 | 0                   | 1                   | 1                     | 2               | 0  |
| 4 | 1                   | 1                   | 1                     | 2               | 0  |
| 5 | 0                   | 0                   | 1                     | 1               | 0  |
| 6 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                     | 2               | 0  |
| 7 | 1                   | 0                   | 0                     | 0               | -  |
| 8 | 1                   | 0                   | 1                     | 0               | -  |

For a successful combined outcome of bargaining *AND* organizational gains, one configuration is observed to be a sufficient causal configuration. The causal configuration for both gains consists of strong external solidarity, strong internal solidarity, and fewer struggle repertoires, as illustrated in Equation 3, where the levels of consistency and coverage are higher than the methodological cutoffs. This successful configuration is observed in two cases (i.e. Keumho Tire and Seoul University Hospital Care).

3- strong external solidarity \* strong internal solidarity \* fewer repertoires = bargaining AND organizational gains (consistency: 0.895928, coverage: 0.45).

The fuzzy-set analysis enables researchers to identify exemplary cases for a contextualized understanding of non-regular workers' struggles that achieve successful outcomes. The two cases of Seoul University Hospital Care and Keumho Tire represent success in both bargaining and organizational gains, while the case of Kia Motor Kwangju plant is an instance of success in bargaining gains only. All three cases exemplify a configuration that combines strong external solidarity, strong internal solidarity, and fewer protest repertoires, resulting in successful struggle outcomes. In addition, Cargo truckers' struggles were successful only in their organizational gains (while succeeding partially in bargaining gains), since they received strong external solidarity and employed fewer protest repertoires.

## Conclusion: Summary and Implications

In Korea, many struggles of non-regular workers, who attempted to organize their own unions and engaged in militant action to protest against employers' inhumane discrimination and illegal exclusion, have failed to achieve the desired outcomes due to the inadequacy of their action resources, which is largely associated with their vulnerable employment status. In this light, our study examined the conditions that led to victory in precarious workers' struggles, by focusing on three attributes (i.e. internal solidarity from regular workers, external solidarity from labour and civil society groups outside the workplace, and protest repertoires mobilized), among various factors affecting these struggles. Specifically, this study identified the configurations of these three conditions that produced successful outcomes in precarious workers' struggles, in terms of bargaining gains and organizational sustainability, by employing fs/QCA modelling to examine 30 major cases of non-regular workers' struggles, occurring during the 16-year period from 1998 to 2013.

A key finding is that the conditional configuration of strong external solidarity, strong internal solidarity, and fewer struggle repertoires constitutes a significant causal path to successful outcomes, as identified in the fs/QCA models concerning bargaining gains, as well as the combined outcome of bargaining and organizational gains. Moreover, the configuration of strong external solidarity and fewer struggle repertoires is found to be another significant causal path to success in terms of organizational gains. These findings reaffirm the idea that strong solidarity bridging, whether with regular workers that have a different employment status in the segmented workplace, or with labour and civil society groups outside the workplace, is the crucial causal condition for precarious workers to achieve desired outcomes from struggles, as highlighted in the existing literature of union revitalization and social movement unionism. In this vein, it cannot be overemphasized that the building of "organic solidarity" (Zoll, 2000) or "protest alliances" (Wills, 2009) with workers of differing statuses and social actors in the

civil community is key to achieving desired outcomes from struggles of precarious workers, who are trapped in poor circumstances for protest action. This is true from a theoretical perspective of social movement, addressing resource mobilization as a *sine qua non* factor that influences the course and outcomes of labour activism (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Thus, it should be underscored that precarious workers, lacking mobilizable action resources, must consciously go beyond the differentiated status and interest structures of the segmented workplace and forge working-class bonds to mobilize the internal solidarity resources provided by regular workers. They must also publicly dramatize their issues and protest actions as a means of generating broad resonance with labour organizations and civil society groups outside the workplace, thereby inducing their active involvement and provision of external solidarity resources.

At the same time, our analysis presents the interesting, but unexpected, finding that when precarious workers' struggles mobilize fewer struggle repertoires, they are likely to achieve successful outcomes of bargaining and organizational gains. Thus, mobilized protest repertoires negatively affect their success, even if they receive internal and external support. While the existing literature on social contention and activism (i.e. McAdam, 1986; McAdam *et al.*, 2001) addresses the forms (i.e. contained or conventional vs. transgressive) and nature (i.e. low risk/cost vs. high risk/cost) of protest repertoires, our analysis finds that the quantity of action repertoires has a significant effect on the outcome of workers' struggles. Specifically, the finding that employing fewer protest repertoires is the key condition for precarious workers' struggles to achieve better outcomes implies that excessive mobilization of repertoires might lead protest actions to become extreme and isolated from actors who could provide internal and external solidarity, and who become offended by those workers' over-militancy. As indicated by Chun (2013), the mobilization of more protest repertoires tends to lock workers into protracted struggles, which involve declines in union members' participation and solidarity actors' support, and escalate protests into desperate, deadlock battles. Linking with the typology of protest repertoires addressed by McAdam (1986), this finding implies that precarious workers who fail to obtain their desired outcome with protest repertoires of low risk/cost are likely to move on to struggle tactics of high risk/cost, but unlikely to achieve what they demand, thereby leading to the paradox of an infertile struggle situation where the more and riskier protest repertoires mobilized by those workers, the less desirable outcomes they gain. As such, the relationship between the quantity of protest repertoires and struggle outcomes can be interpreted as presenting a polarization of moderation (fewer struggle repertoires and better outcomes) and extremization (more struggle repertoires and worse outcomes) (Lee, 2016).

It should be noted that our research has several limitations. First, the context of our analysis is specific: the South Korean institutional framework of industrial relations, as exemplified in enterprise unionism, differs from Western advanced countries, including those in North America. Second, our fs/QCA models do not examine the effect of non-union organizational factors, such as employers' counter-responses, which might significantly affect the outcomes of non-regular workers' struggles. This is associated with limited secondary source data, from which we tried to extract relevant information concerning the events of non-regular workers' struggles, but which did not contain enough information about other organizational information. Third, the sample of our fs/QCA cannot be representative of all the struggles of precarious or non-regular workers, since we cannot avoid a non-random sampling bias by mainly selecting salient cases (largely from large firms) for which sufficient information on non-regular workers' struggles was available. The next step would be to apply the hypothetical findings, drawn from this fs/QCA, to both qualitative case study and quantitative analysis to further delve into the causal mechanism concerning the process and outcomes of precarious workers' struggles.

## Notes

- 1 In this study, non-regular workers denotes those who are in various forms of non-regular employment, such as temporary or fixed-term, part-time, indirectly employed, and dependent self-employed positions. The non-regular workers in South Korea represent a precarious workforce, who suffer from job insecurity and inferior employment conditions in the generic meaning.
- 2 It should be noted that the official data on labour disputes, which are reported yearly by the Ministry of Employment and Labor, underestimates the frequency of labour disputes to some extent, because these data exclude illegal dispute action launched by some non-regular worker groups, who do not have legal employment status, like dependent self-employed workers.
- 3 Wright (2000) suggests that structural power is produced by the location of workers within the labour market, while associational power is produced by the formation of collective organizations of workers.
- 4 According to Hirshleifer (1991), such a paradox often occurs when powerless people unexpectedly prevail over powerful people by exerting a desperate will and strategic rationality for their survival.
- 5 For example, some unions in Anglophone countries (i.e. SEIU and HERE) made strenuous efforts to organize precarious workers, which were created by employer-driven externalization and casualization of employment relations, and employed transgressive protest repertoires, such as bridge blockades, public rallies, sit-down protests, and solidarity campaigns with civil society groups, rather than resorting to the contained repertoire of strike action (Bronfenbrenner and Hickey, 2004; Hickey *et al.*, 2010).
- 6 According to McAdam (1986: 67), cost denotes "the expenditure of time, money and energy required of a person engaged in any particular form of activism," while risk denotes "the anticipated dangers—whether legal, social, physical, and financial—of engaging in a particular type of movement activity."

- 7 Note that all but one case (Kiryung Electronics) were related with or happened in large firms.
- 8 The employment types of non-regular workers involved in 30 dispute events are as follows: five cases by temporary workers, two cases by daily on-call workers, 15 cases by subcontracted workers, two cases by dispatched workers, and six cases by dependent self-employed workers. Out of those 30 cases, 13 cases occurred in manufacturing sectors, eight cases in service sectors, four cases in the construction sector, two cases in the transportation sector, and three cases in the public sector. More information (i.e. length of struggles, types of protest repertoires and bargaining gains) about the cases in our analysis can be found in Lee (2016).
- 9 According to McAdam (1986), accounting for the risk protest repertoires posed to struggle participants, in terms of bodily and financial damages, as well as legal punishment, the protest repertoires of categories 2, 4, 5 and 7 are classified as high-risk. The effect of high-risk protest repertoires on the outcome of their struggles is consistently the same as that of total protest repertoires in our fs/QCA models.
- 10 We appreciate research assistance provided by Jik-Soo Kim, who is a doctoral student at Chung-Ang University and has been an activist of the Korean non-regular labour movement for several years. For this research, he collected documentary data regarding non-regular workers' struggles and played the role of the "blind" reviewer to double-check whether our assessment of the five dimensions was reliable and valid.
- 11 Among the three solutions of the fuzzy-set QCA (i.e. parsimonious, complex and intermediate), the intermediate solution is the most interpretable and preferable one (Ragin, 2008). While parsimonious and complex solutions are extremely intricate or derived automatically by software, the intermediate solution requires the researcher's decision based on theoretical knowledge and can achieve balance between parsimony and complexity (Ragin, 2008: 175).
- 12 The nine cases are as follows: Kia motor Kwangju plant, Seoul university hospital care, Keumho tire, Ulsan plant construction, Dump truckers, Hyundai Hysco, Kia motor Hwasung plant, Coscom, and Hongik University janitors.
- 13 The ten cases are as follows; Kia Motor Kwangju plant, Seoul University Hospital Care, Keumho Tire, Ulsan Plant Construction, Human Resource Development Service of Korea, Dump truckers, Hyundai Hysco, Kia Motor Hwasung plant, Cargo truckers, and Hongik University janitors.
- 14 To produce the fuzzy-set scores of the combined outcome in 30 cases, we adopt the minimum principle. This means that we calculate the membership score of the set "bargaining gains and organizational gains," which is the subset of both bargaining and organization gains sets, by taking the minimum membership score of each case in the sets that are combined (Ragin, 2008: 37).
- 15 The eight cases are as follows: Kia Motor Kwangju plant, Seoul University Hospital Care, Keumho Tire, Ulsan Plant Construction, Dump truckers, Hyundai Hysco, Kia Motor Hwasung plant, and Hongik University janitors.

## References

- Atzeni, Maurizio (2016) "Beyond Trade Unions' Strategy? The Social Construction of Precarious Workers Organizing in the City of Buenos Aires", *Labor History*, 57 (2), p. 193-214.
- Benassi, Chiara and Lisa Dorigatti (2015) "Straight to the Core: Explaining Union Responses to the Casualization of Work: The IG Metall Campaign for Agency Workers", *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 53 (3), p. 533-555.

- Bronfenbrenner, Kate and Robert Hickey (2004) "Changing to Organize: A National Assessment of Union Organizing Strategies", in Milkman, Ruth and Kim Voss (eds.), *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Chun, Jennifer Jihye (2009) *Organizing at the Margins: The Symbolic Politics of Labor in South Korea and the United States*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Chun, Jennifer Jihye (2013) "Labor Militancy and Civil Society: the Contentious Politics of South Korea's Irregular Workforce", paper presented to the Hosei University Workshop.
- Conley, Hazel and Paul Stewart (2008) "Representing Fixed-term Workers: The Anatomy of a Trade Union Campaign", *Employee Relations*, 30 (5), p. 515-533.
- D'Art, Daryl and Thomas Turner (2002) "The Decline of Worker Solidarity and the End of Collectivism?", *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 23 (1), p. 7-34.
- Frege, Carola and John Kelly (2003) "Union Revitalization Strategies in Comparative Perspective", *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 9 (1), p. 7-24.
- Ganz, Marshall (2000) "Resources and Resourcefulness: Strategic Capacity in the Unionization of California Agriculture, 1959-1966", *American Journal of Sociology*, 105 (4), p. 1003-1062.
- Gumbrell-McCormick, Rebecca (2011) "European Trade Unions and 'Atypical' Workers", *Industrial Relations Journal*, 42 (3), p 293-310.
- Hickey, Robert, Sarosh Kuruvilla, and Tashlin Lakhani (2010) "No Panacea for Success: Member Activism, Organizing and Union Renewal", *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 48 (1), p. 53-83.
- Hirshleifer, Jack (1991) "The Paradox of Power", *Economics and Politics*, 3 (3), p. 177-200.
- Kornelakis, Andreas and Horen Voskeritsian (2016) "Getting Together or Breaking Apart: Trade Union Strategies, Restructuring and Contingent Workers in Southern Europe", *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 37 (2), p. 1-19.
- Korea Labor Institute (2015) *2015 KLI Non-regular Labor Statistics*, Seoul: KLI (in Korean).
- Lee, Byoung-Hoon (2016) "Worker Militancy at the Margins: Struggles of Non-regular Workers in South Korea", *Development and Society*, 45 (1), p. 1-37.
- Lee, Byoung-Hoon and Stephen Frenkel (2004) "Divided Workers: Social Relations between Contract and Regular Workers in a Korean Auto Plant", *Work, Employment and Society*, 18 (3), p. 507-530.
- Lee, Sophia SY (2013) "Fuzzy-Set Method in Comparative Social Policy: A Critical Introduction and Review of the Applications of the Fuzzy-Set Method", *Quality and Quantity*, 47 (4), p. 1905-1922.
- Lee, Yoonkyung (2015) "Sky Protest: New Forms of Labor Protest in Neoliberal Korea", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45 (3), p. 443-464.
- Lévesque, Christian and Gregor Murray (2010) "Understanding Union Power: Resources and Capabilities for Renewing Union Capacity", *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 16 (3), p. 333-350.
- Mattoni, Alice and Markos Vogiatzoglou (2014) "Today, We are Precarious Tomorrow, We will be Unbeatable: Early Struggles of Precarious Workers in Italy and Greece", in Chabanet, Didier



- and Frédéric Royall (eds.), *From Silence to Protest: International Perspectives on Weakly Resourced Groups*, Burlington, USA: Ashgate.
- McAdam, Doug (1986) "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: the Case of Freedom Summer", *American Journal of Sociology*, 92 (1), p. 64-90.
- McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly (2001) *Dynamics of Contention*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, John and Mayer Zald (1977) "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory", *American Journal of Sociology*, 82 (6), p. 1212-1241.
- Pernicka, Susanne (2005) "The Evolution of Union Politics for Atypical Employees: A Comparison between German and Austrian Trade Unions in the Private Sector", *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 26 (2), p. 205-228.
- Pulignano, Valeria, Luis Gervasi, and Fabio de Franceschi (2016) "Union Responses to Precarious Workers: Italy and Spain Compared", *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 22 (1), p. 39-55.
- Ragin, Charles (1987) *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: Univ. of California Press.
- Ragin, Charles (2000) *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ragin, Charles (2008) *Redesigning Social Inquiries*, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ragin, Charles and Sean Davey (2014) *fs/QCA [Computer Programme]*, Version 2.5. Irvine, CA: University of California.
- Rodgers, Gerry and Janine Rodgers (1989) *Precarious Jobs in Labor Market Regulation: The Growth of Atypical Employment in Western Europe*, Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies.
- Simms, Melanie and Deborah Dean (2015) "Mobilizing Contingent Workers: An Analysis of Two Successful Cases", *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 36 (1), p. 173-190.
- Standing, Guy (2011) *Precariat: the New Dangerous Class*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Wills, Jane (2009) "Subcontracted Employment and its Challenge to Labor", *Labor Studies Journal*, 34 (4), p. 441-460.
- Wright, Erik (2000) "Working-class Power, Capitalist-class Interests, and Class Compromise", *American Journal of Sociology*, 105 (4), p. 957-1002.
- Zoll, Rainer (2000) *Was ist Solidarität Heute?* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

## SUMMARY

### Winning Conditions of Precarious Workers' Struggles: A Reflection Based on Case Studies from South Korea

In South Korea, many struggles of non-regular workers, who attempted to organize their unions and engage in militant action to protest against employers' inhumane discrimination and illegal exclusion, have failed to achieve the desired outcomes, due to their vulnerable employment status and their lack of action

resources. In this light, our study examines the conditions that lead to victory in precarious workers' struggles, by focusing on three attributes: internal solidarity with regular workers, external solidarity from labour and civil society groups outside the workplace, and mobilized protest repertoires. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the configurations of these three conditions that produce successful outcomes in precarious workers' struggles, in terms of bargaining gains and organizational sustainability. We do this by employing fs/QCA modelling to examine 30 major cases of non-regular worker struggles occurring over a 16-year period from 1998 to 2013.

Our analysis presents the finding that the conditional configuration of strong external solidarity, strong internal solidarity, and fewer struggle repertoires constitutes a significant causal path to successful outcomes. This reaffirms the idea that strong solidarity bridging, whether with regular workers that have a different employment status in the segmented workplace, or with labour and civil society groups outside the workplace, is the crucial causal condition for precarious workers to achieve their desired outcomes from struggle. An unexpected finding, however, is that when precarious worker struggles mobilize fewer struggle repertoires, they are likely to achieve the successful outcomes of bargaining and organizational gains. Our study contributes to the theoretical elaboration of labour movement revitalization for the precariat class, by shedding light on the activism of precarious workers, considering that the English-language literature that pays attention to the active role of such atypical workers in staging protests against employers' inhumane treatments and the neoliberal labour regime is limited.

**KEYWORDS:** precarious labour, non-regular workers, labour solidarity, protest repertoire, industrial relations, fuzzy-set/Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs/QCA).

## RÉSUMÉ

### Conditions gagnantes lors de luttes menées par des travailleurs précaires : réflexions à partir d'études de cas de la Corée du Sud

En Corée du Sud, plusieurs luttes menées par des travailleurs précaires, qui cherchaient à s'organiser en syndicat et à s'engager dans des actions militantes afin de protester contre la discrimination inhumaine et l'exclusion illégale de la part de leurs employeurs, ont échoué dans l'atteinte des objectifs recherchés, à cause justement de leur statut d'emploi vulnérable et d'un manque de ressources. À la lumière de ces constats, notre étude cherche à examiner les conditions dans lesquelles de telles luttes sont susceptibles de conduire à des victoires, en mettant l'accent sur trois caractéristiques : la solidarité interne en milieu de travail à leur égard de la part des salariés réguliers, la solidarité externe manifestée par des groupements ouvriers et la société civile en dehors du milieu de travail, et, enfin, la mobilisation de répertoires de contestation. Plus particulièrement, cette étude cherche à identifier les configurations de ces trois conditions menant au succès

des luttes des travailleurs précaires en termes de gains lors de négociations et de durabilité organisationnelle. Pour y parvenir, nous avons eu recours à une modélisation par analyse comparative qualitative de type ensemble flou (*fuzzy set*) afin d'étudier 30 cas majeurs de luttes de travailleurs atypiques qui se sont déroulées sur une période de 16 ans, soit de 1998 à 2013.

Selon notre analyse, la configuration susceptible de constituer une avenue significative pour le succès est conditionnelle à la présence des trois conditions mentionnées, soit une forte solidarité externe, une forte solidarité interne, et des répertoires de contestation en nombre réduit. Un tel résultat renforce l'idée que de solides ponts de solidarité, que ce soit avec des travailleurs qui ont un statut d'emploi différent dans le milieu de travail, ou avec des groupes de travailleurs ou la société civile extérieurs au milieu de travail, constituent des préalables cruciaux pour les travailleurs précaires désireux d'obtenir gain de cause. Un résultat inattendu, toutefois, est à l'effet que lorsque de telles luttes mobilisent un nombre restreint de répertoires de contestation, elles sont davantage susceptibles de mener à des gains en termes de négociation et d'organisation. Ainsi, notre étude apporte une contribution au développement de la théorie de la revitalisation du mouvement ouvrier face à la précarisation, en mettant en lumière le rôle de l'activisme chez les travailleurs précaires, en tenant compte du fait que la littérature anglaise qui se consacre au rôle actif de tels travailleurs atypiques dans l'organisation de contestations contre les traitements inhumains de la part d'employeurs et le régime de travail néolibéral demeure limitée.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** travail précaire, travailleurs atypiques, solidarité ouvrière, répertoire de contestation, relations industrielles, analyse comparative qualitative par ensemble flou.

## RESUMEN

### Condiciones ganadoras en las luchas de los trabajadores precarios: una reflexión a partir de estudios de caso en Corea del Sur

En Corea del Sur, varias luchas llevadas a cabo por trabajadores precarios, que tenían como objetivo de organizarse en sindicato e implicarse en las acciones militantes con el fin de protestar contra la discriminación inhumana y la exclusión ilegal de parte de los empleadores, no han logrado los objetivos propuestos, debido justamente a su situación de empleo vulnerable y de la falta de recursos. Esclarecido por estas constataciones, nuestro estudio busca estudiar las condiciones en las cuales tales luchas son susceptibles de conducir a victorias, poniendo el acento en tres características: la solidaridad interna en el medio de trabajo de parte de los asalariados regulares respecto a los trabajadores precarios, la solidaridad externa manifestada por los grupos obreros y por la sociedad civil fuera del trabajo, y finalmente, la movilización de REPERTORIOS de contestación. Más precisamente, este estudio busca a identificar las configuraciones de estas tres condiciones suscepti-

bles de conducir al éxito de las luchas de los trabajadores precarios en términos de logros durante las negociaciones y de durabilidad organizacional. Para esto, hemos utilizado una modelización para el análisis comparativo cualitativo de tipo « *fuzzy set* » con el objetivo de estudiar 30 casos importantes de luchas de trabajadores atípicos que han acontecido en un periodo de 16 años, es decir de 1998 a 2013.

Según nuestro análisis, la configuración susceptible de constituir una vía significativa hacia el éxito es condicional a la presencia de tres condiciones mencionadas, es decir una fuerte solidaridad externa, una fuerte solidaridad interna y repertorios de contestación en cantidad reducida. Tal resultado refuerza la idea que la presencia de puntos sólidos de solidaridad, sea con trabajadores que tienen una situación de empleo diferente en el medio de trabajo, o sea con grupos de trabajadores o de la sociedad civil exteriores al medio de trabajo, constituye una condición previa crucial para los trabajadores precarios deseosos de ganar su causa. Sin embargo, un resultado inesperado indica que cuando se moviliza una cantidad restringida de repertorios de contestación, las luchas serán más susceptibles de obtener logros en términos de negociación y de organización. Así, nuestro estudio contribuye al desarrollo de la teoría de la revitalización del movimiento obrero frente a la precarización, haciendo resaltar el rol del activismo de los trabajadores precarios, teniendo en cuenta el hecho que la literatura inglesa consagrada al rol activo de tales trabajadores atípicos en la organización de contestaciones contra los tratos inhumanos de la parte de los empleadores y el régimen de trabajo neoliberal sigue siendo limitada.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** trabajo precario, trabajadores atípicos, solidaridad obrera, repertorio de protesta, relaciones industriales, análisis comparativo cualitativo de tipo « *fuzzy set* » (fs/QCA).