

Labor Organizations and Protest: Reflections on the Fragmentation of Unions, Union Pluralism, and Strikes

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Abstract

The article examines how the structure of labor unions in Chile has affected the dynamics of labor protests over the past decade. We study the relationship between union fragmentation and pluralism and strike activity in the private sector (2011–2019). The central hypothesis is that economic industries with greater union pluralism and fragmentation have higher levels of labor conflict. Consistent with the hypothesis, the results indicate a positive relationship between union pluralism and fragmentation and strike frequency, a relationship not fully explained by differences in union power between sectors. We argue that the existence of regulations promoting union fragmentation is crucial for understanding unions' weak bargaining power and, somewhat paradoxically, the high levels of strike activity in Chile. More broadly, the chapter contributes to the debate on how labor organizations influenced the growth of social protest in Chile before the social outburst 2019.

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