

## **Exploring the Development of the Boundary Role Persons Concept**

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### **Abstrak**

Organizations need other parties outside the organization so the organization needs to interact with the outside environment properly. Therefore, the organization has an open system. There is an intermediary that connects the organization with outsiders called "boundary". There are internal boundaries and external boundaries. Boundaries can be seen from various levels, namely the macro level and the micro-level. Macro-level is discussing boundary from an organizational perspective while the micro-level sees people in boundary positions individually. Boundaries at the macro level can be observed from organizational boundaries, between organizations and the environment. Boundaries at the micro-level can be observed from individuals who represent the organization in interacting with the environment. A boundary from an individual perspective is called Boundary Role Persons (BRP). The term BRP emerged in 1976. BRP research began to flourish in the 1990s and has been widely developed to date.

**Keywords:** boundary, internal-external boundary, micro dan macro boundary level, *Boundary Role Persons*

### **Introduction**

The organization is a container group of individuals in which there are parts. Each section is a system that has a different division of labour and work mechanism but synergizes with each other because it has a common goal. Each system can not be separated from other systems (Berrien 1976). If one system has a problem, then the other system also feels the consequences. This condition shows that all parts of the system become important in running the organization.

An organization also needs other parties outside the organization so that the organization needs to interact with the outside environment properly. This is what proves that an organization has an open system (Berrien 1976). Organizational openness with external parties is in the form of interactions that include input (procurement of goods) and output (distribution of the results of processing both services, goods, and the results of decisions). Another term is the product search and distribution section. This section is part of the edge or boundaries of the organization, commonly referred to as "boundary" (Adams 1976).

Research on the term boundary in various scientific journals appears with various meanings. In language, "boundary" means boundary. As for social research, experts define "boundary" in various ways. There are some experts interpret boundary as a boundary between oneself and others and between oneself and the environment, normative boundaries, and boundaries between the organization and the environment outside the organization (Adams 1976). The boundary in this study is interpreted as an organizational boundary

Organizational boundaries are defined as lines that indicate the existence of boundaries or boundaries of the identity of members of the organization when meeting with members of other organizations. Meetings of two or more members from different organizations usually occur when carrying out certain interactions to represent the interests of each organization both in the input and output processes. The input and output process requires an effective and efficient transaction process so that the activities of the organization can run smoothly. Usually, the organization appoints several individuals to represent the interests of the organization in dealing with outsiders. Individuals in this position are called Boundary Role Persons (BRP).

## **Methods**

This type of research is literature research, studies or critically reviews knowledge, ideas, or findings contained in the body of academic-oriented literature, and formulates theoretical and methodological contributions for a particular topic. This method finds various theories, laws, propositions, principles, or ideas used to analyze and solve questions given understanding and explanation so that it can be understood well by the reader.

The nature of this research is descriptive analysis, which is the regular breakdown of data that has been obtained, then the approach used in this study is a philosophical approach. A philosophical approach is an approach taken to reason and compile a data systematically based on a particular point of view (in this case the viewpoint used is the historical point of view of the development of research on Boundary Role Persons). Data Sources The data used in this article are secondary data. Secondary data is data obtained not from direct observation. However, these data were obtained from the results of studies that have been done by previous researchers. In this article, the secondary data sources referred to are primary or original scientific books and reports contained in articles or journals (printed and/or non-printed) with regard to the history of the birth of the concept of the Boundary Role Persons and what year they began to be used by researchers and how the development of research.

## **Result and Discussion**

Boundary discussion can be seen from various levels, namely the macro level and the micro-level. Macro-level is discussing boundaries from an organizational perspective while the micro-level sees people in boundary positions individually (Thissen et al. 2010). Boundary research at the macro level can be observed from organizational boundaries, namely between organizations and the environment. Boundary discussion at the micro-level can be observed from individuals who dedicate themselves to represent the organization in interacting with the environment. A boundary from an individual perspective is termed by Adams (1976) as Boundary Role Persons (BRP).

There are terms of internal boundary and external boundary. Internal boundaries such as between teams in organizations (Witt and Ferris 2003), parts of student affairs with students in universities (Winslow and Wehtje-Winslow 2007), and between groups in organizations (Abdul-Rahman et al. 2012). The external boundary as explained by Adams (1976) is a boundary that is located in the outer periphery of an organization that is directly related to other organizations or the environment. For example the sale of organization A to the purchase of organization B. More clearly the position of the boundary can be explained in the following figure.

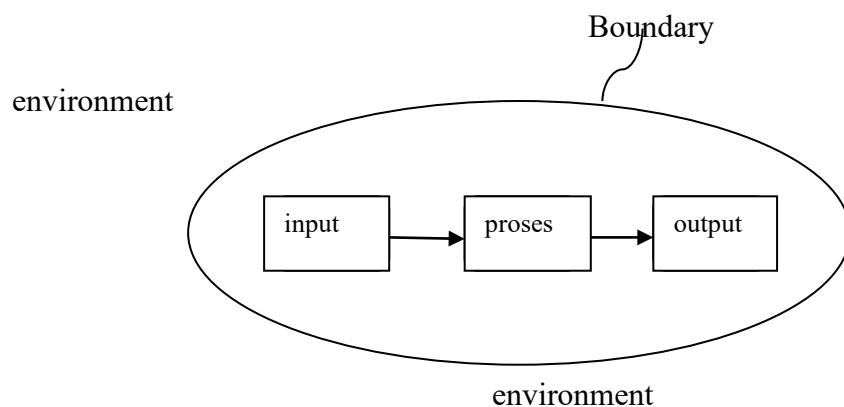


Figure 1. Position boundary in the organization. Source: Sauter (2008), page 2

Figure 1 explains that boundary is an opening relationship between the organization and outsiders so that the organization becomes an open system. Openness results in a way of interacting continuously with the environment, receiving input, and providing output through boundaries. This is what distinguishes from a closed system organization that only interacts with the components in its own organization (Walonick, 1993). The system manages the input which then results of this management in the form of products provided through boundaries to the environment.

The term BRP emerged in 1976 (Adams 1976). Spekman in 1979 tried to strengthen the BRP concept by examining BRP from purchasing agents. Spekman (1979) examined the role of BRP in internal organizations. The results of his research showed that the social strength that contained positive perceptions of fellow members of the organization towards BRP affected BRP's performance when dealing with parties outside the organization. Perry and Angle (1979) developed research on the effect of psychological closeness between constituents and BRP on bargaining success. Unfortunately, this kind of BRP research was not sustainable at the beginning of the term BRP. Perry and Angle (1979) reinforce this opinion by stating that in the early years the term BRP had not attracted the attention of researchers.

BRP research began to bloom in the 1990s. Research trends throughout the 1990s focused mostly on the stress experienced by BRP. The emergence of these studies is due to the sensitivity of researchers who realize that the work situation of BRP is very complex related to role ambiguity and role conflict. In accordance with its work, BRP cannot avoid being pressured inside and outside the organization.

Mehra and Schenkel (2005) state that individuals who fall into the BRP category have a unique and risky occupational character. A description of the story of BRP's work risks experienced by BRP from various types of work even with different levels of risk. The purchasing department's BRP can be used as an example of this explanation. On the one hand, BRP must be able to accommodate the desires of companies that think efficiency because the costs associated with purchasing can reduce company financing in general. On the other hand, the purchasing department must also be able to accommodate supplier expectations. Usually what happens is that the expectations of both parties are not always consistent. BRP in representing the interests of the organization faces an uncertain situation, full of turmoil, role conflict, demands, and high work risks so that the role of BRP can be disrupted.

Regarding the conflicting role of BRP, previous researchers examined a lot of BRP's work stress problems (Gilboa et al. 2008). Porter, Kraft, and Claycomb (2003) stated that in 1992-1999 there were many BRP kinds of research which examined the introduction and management of BRP stress as an effort to find solutions for the smooth running of an organizational system. The variables revealed are mostly related to stress coping, stress triggers, and coping strategies (Cooper, Rout, and Faragher 1989) and stressors that arise due to role conflict, role ambiguity, and excessive dual roles (Pati and Singh 1998).

The development of this research shows that the concept of BRP is increasingly being discussed in various types of work that represent organizations to interact with outsiders. This kind of research continues to grow until now, as evidenced by the emergence of several BRP studies by Barrick, Piotrowski, and Stewart (2002) who examined sales; Witt, Barrick, Burke, and Mount (2002) who examined sales of household appliance companies; Wood, Glew, and Street (2004) examined the HR department for furniture and insurance sales. This series of studies is more focused on the output or the part that distributes the company's production.

The BRP position is a very important part for the organization because it functions to open the way for cooperation with outsiders. Even more so in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, organizations need to open themselves up to do a lot of collaboration with various partners so that it requires the role of BRP to maintain and improve its quality in order to continue to survive and develop.

BRP in dealing with outsiders often faces a dilemma so how BRP's perception of internal and external is very influential for BRP's success. The internal atmosphere of the organization needed by BRP was acceptance, openness, and trust of superiors (Adams 1976). The atmosphere of the relationship with the organization's external parties needed is an open and mutually supportive relationship from the partners so that the BRP's task is successful in accommodating the internal and external interests of the organization.

A search of the results of previous BRP research in journals and scientific articles shows that most research is focused on work stress (Gilboa et al. 2008). This is very reasonable because BRP's work is full of challenges, temptations, demands, and risks from both external and internal organizations. Many experts then tried to find a solution by analyzing the BRP work stress factors to the solution. While there are other interesting and equally important variables, namely potential factors that influence the success of BRP.

The BRP concept is not new but empirical development still needs to be done so that the results are more convincing. This means that there is still a chance for further research. This research is also intended to reintroduce the concept of BRP which actually has not been widely used by previous researchers.

Research on BRP sections is mostly in external positions such as insurance employees who sell policies, telemarketing sales (Barrick, Mount, and Strauss 1993); logistics couriers who provide logistics distribution services to consumers and pharmaceutical sales who distribute drugs that also examine sales department workers, even though the function of BRP is very diverse not only in marketing or in the external area. This concern is also expressed by Mehra and Schenkel (2005) who stated that most of the research on BRP is in the world of product sales, based on this reason, it is necessary to do in-depth research on BRP with more varied types of work in methodology, subjects, and variables.

## **Conclusion**

The results of a literature search on Boundary Role Persons (BRP) show that the development of research with the BRP concept is quite encouraging. It is proven that the concept of BRP is increasingly being discussed in various types of work that represent organizations to interact with outsiders. A search of the results of previous BRP research in journals and scientific articles shows that most research is focused on work stress. However, increasingly towards the end, there have begun to be developed solutions to the problems faced by BRP which indeed have high work risks.

The current BRP research is more on BRP parts in external positions such as marketing, public relations, and others, even though there are still many BRP positions in the input areas such as purchases, prospective student searches, and others. This is understandable because the BRP concept is not yet too popular. Researchers more often use marketing theory to examine marketing, public relations theory to examine public relations, and others, even though these positions have almost the same peculiarities organization (BRP).

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## **Biografi**

**Nurus Sa'adah**, born in Rembang, Central Java, graduated from S1, S2, S3, and Professional Psychology Education at UGM. Currently, he is a permanent lecturer at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. Prefers research related to HR in the marginal position of the organization (representative of the organization to deal with outsiders) such as the promotion department, the procurement of goods, and labour, as well as human resources who are marginalized in organizations such as women workers, disabled workers and elderly workers. In addition, he was also active in giving seminars and training in the HRM field and became a sharing team "Enlightening Parenting"

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