

MANAGEMENT OF WAR-INFLUENCED DISPERSED TEAMS

VOLODYMYR VOLOBOIEV*

*Corresponding author: v.voloboev@econom.zp.ua

Abstract. The article is dedicated to the study of managing teams dispersed under the influence of war. Military aggression has led to the forced relocation of workforce teams, creating unique challenges for effective management of organizations and teams. The aim of the article is to develop comprehensive approaches to managing teams whose members have been forced to relocate to different regions due to the consequences of military aggression, taking into account crisis conditions, geographical dispersion, and the specific needs of employees.

The article introduces the term “war-influenced dispersed teams” and analyzes the characteristics of such teams, comparing them to other types of remote teams. This comparison highlights unique features that affect team performance and management in conditions of instability.

The author identifies determinants of the issues faced by war-influenced dispersed teams: forced separation, structural transformation during a crisis, unequal working conditions, and socio-cultural pressure. The article analyzes the potential problems arising from these determinants.

The scientific novelty of this work lies in the development of a management model for war-influenced dispersed teams, which accounts for the specific conditions of crisis and geographical distribution. This model comprises the following elements: crisis management, security assurance, psychological support, inclusive leadership, resource provision, adaptation of work processes to remote formats, location-tailored individual motivation, and activity monitoring. The article also proposes directions for implementing this model, considering the needs of different employee groups.

The practical significance of these findings lies in the development of specific recommendations for managing war-influenced dispersed teams to maintain their stability and productivity. The proposed model provides team leaders with tools for adapting to new realities and organizing effective work in crisis conditions. Specifically, these recommendations can be used to adjust internal processes in companies with remote employees or teams relocating due to war, thereby preserving corporate culture and mitigating stress and psychological pressure on employees.

Keywords: geographically dispersed teams, team management, remote work, labor relocation.

JEL Classification: M12, M54, L14

1. INTRODUCTION

The military aggression has led to large-scale transformations in both society and the business environment, forcing companies to adapt their management approaches to new realities. One of the key consequences has been the forced displacement of enterprises and their employees. As a result, many organizations now face a situation where part of their workforce remains in their pre-war locations, some have relocated to safer regions within Ukraine, and others have moved abroad.

This personnel dispersion not only alters the work format but also complicates management

processes. Unlike traditional virtual teams, typically formed as part of a deliberate business strategy, the current situation involves companies adapting to the involuntary geographical distribution of their employees. This creates new challenges in coordinating work processes, maintaining effective communication, and ensuring productive collaboration among employees operating in different economic, sociocultural, and legal environments.

Specifically, the distribution of a team across countries with varying living standards and regulatory conditions complicates both financial and non-financial motivation strategies and requires adjustments in performance evaluation and monitoring systems. Differences in time zones, resource availability, and the ability to work safely make workload management and equal engagement of all employees more challenging. The absence of physical interaction not only alters the nature of teamwork but also increases the risk of weakening corporate culture and reducing trust within the team.

Under these circumstances, exploring management approaches that enable effective organization of work in geographically dispersed teams becomes crucial, minimizing the risks of productivity loss, weakened team cohesion, and the departure of key employees. Developing appropriate management tools is essential to maintaining business process integrity, enhancing organizational adaptability to crisis conditions, and ensuring long-term resilience.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Modern organizations face the need to adapt to the changing conditions of the global market, which is accompanied by the decentralization of work processes and an increasing reliance on virtual teams. The use of information technology facilitates the formation of such teams, enabling specialists from different parts of the world to collaborate regardless of time and spatial constraints. As (Bal & Foster, 2010) state, virtual teamworking has been suggested as a new solution involving the use of IT to support multidisciplinary teamwork among experts distributed across distance and time.

Virtual teams represent an organizational response to the challenges of the modern business environment. Hertel et al. (2005) note that due to globalization, many companies implement virtual teams, where members coordinate their activities mainly through electronic communication technologies such as email and video conferencing. These teams follow specific lifecycle stages, from preparation and launch to performance management, training, development, and reintegration.

However, managing virtual teams is associated with numerous challenges. Ebrahim et al. (2009) emphasize the importance of overcoming conflicts, managing cultural and functional diversity, and building trust among team members. In response to these challenges, various management models and problem-solving strategies have been proposed, including the Virtual Team Management Challenges Mitigation model (Khan et al., 2018).

Researchers have also paid particular attention to the adaptability of virtual teams, identifying key sources of resilience and strategies for its development. (Kirkman & Stoverink, 2021) propose a model of a resilient virtual team leader, which enhances the stability and effectiveness of such teams.

In the context of Ukraine, personnel management processes are significantly impacted by the destructive war, which presents a unique challenge for managers at all levels. The scientific community has responded to these circumstances with several studies aimed at finding creative solutions within the personnel management system (Batiuk & Hirniak, 2024), identifying the specifics of personnel management under martial law (Kudelia & Yakovenko, 2023), and investigating the impact of stress management on human productivity and personnel management during wartime (Mekshun, 2023). The work of (Kopchak et al., 2023) outlines the directions of transformation in modern management as a response to managerial issues in wartime conditions.

Despite the scientific value of these studies, questions remain regarding the management of teams forced to separate due to military actions, the challenges they face, and the managerial decisions necessary to mitigate potential problems associated with these processes.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The purpose of this study is to examine the management of virtual teams forcibly dispersed due to military conflicts and to develop a management model for such teams. The study aims to identify key challenges faced by these teams, assess their impact on team performance.

This study employs various methods to thoroughly examine virtual team management. Specifically, analysis and synthesis are used to comprehensively explore different aspects of virtual team management, providing an understanding of their characteristics and effectiveness. Comparative analysis is applied to study the differences between war-influenced dispersed teams and remote teams that work from different locations but have varying structures of interaction and communication needs. Modeling facilitates the development of a conceptual management model for virtual teams, considering various factors that influence successful collaboration and coordination. Abstraction is used to identify the key challenges and risks faced by such teams, allowing the researcher to isolate common problems and formulate strategies for overcoming them. Additionally, graphical representation of the study's findings is used for clarity, providing a visual representation of the structure of the proposed management model and its interconnections, which aids in understanding complex concepts.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The business and organizational relocation process that began in Ukraine as a result of military aggression is accompanied not only by the movement of business assets but also by significant changes in the distribution of labor resources. Unlike enterprise relocation, which has a statistical basis and can be assessed through registration, tax, and economic indicators, personnel migration is more dynamic and dependent on individual circumstances. Business relocation has become the subject of academic research, within which the scale, characteristics, and consequences of this process for the national economy are analyzed (Kudyrko & Obozny, 2024; Yakymova, 2024).

Certain industries allow for partial or complete employee relocation both within Ukraine and abroad without significant loss of business process efficiency. According to Tereshchuk (2022), companies in the IT sector, professional services (marketing, consulting, design), and healthcare are the most inclined to relocate abroad.

According to the study "Relocation: The New IT Landscape of Ukraine" (IT Ukraine Association & Sayenko Kharenko, 2022), more than 50% of surveyed IT companies did not relocate, instead switching to remote work. Among those that did relocate, 45% moved their offices within Ukraine, while 42% partially relocated abroad. Regarding the relocation of individual employees, the highest percentage of relocated specialists was observed in companies with more than 1,200 employees – 32%; in medium-sized companies, this figure was 24%; and in small companies, it was 14%.

Against the backdrop of these processes, a new type of work organization is emerging, characterized by the geographical distribution of teams. In such teams, some employees work from abroad, some have relocated to other regions of Ukraine, while others have remained in their previous places of residence and work. This dynamic alters the nature of interaction among team members, as a significant portion of them had worked together in a shared physical workspace before the war, despite now being physically dispersed. Thus, a new form of team interaction arises, for which we propose the term "war-influenced dispersed teams."

Among the existing definitions of teams whose members work remotely, the following terms are encountered:

- virtual teams are groups of people who collaborate remotely, typically outside of office environments, using digital technologies (Kravchuk et al., 2023);
- distributed teams are teams whose members can perform their tasks from different cities or countries. Distributed teams may include members who work in an office, as well as those working from

home, coworking spaces, or from abroad, in countries with different time zones (Vaskiv & Veretennikova, 2024);

- remote teams are groups of people working together at a distance, using communication tools and internet technologies. A remote team may work on projects across various fields, such as software development, marketing, design, finance, and others (Oliinyk, 2023).

Although these terms share similar meanings and indicate the geographical distribution of workers, we propose using the term “war-influenced dispersed teams” for several important reasons. First, it emphasizes the forced nature of the distribution resulting from external circumstances, such as war and the relocation process, distinguishing this type of team from typical distributed or remote teams, where member relocation often occurs voluntarily or according to organizational strategy. Second, the use of the term “war-influenced dispersed teams” allows for a more precise reflection of the realities where team interaction is under threat of disruption due to physical distance between members, and maintaining the functionality and efficiency of such teams in new conditions becomes critical.

Recent studies devote considerable attention to the characteristics of teams working remotely, analyzing their structural features, interaction dynamics, technological support, task performance efficiency, and impact on participants’ psychological well-being. Researchers also examine the role of leadership, coordination mechanisms, and factors determining the productivity of such teams in various organizational contexts.

Virtual teams have become crucial in organizational strategies, particularly following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, their adoption predates this period and has been a gradual process of integrating remote work into business operations (Frost & Duan, 2020). Managers of such teams must utilize modern communication tools, such as webinars, teleconferencing, and cloud technologies, while maintaining clear communication processes to ensure effective collaboration (Hrynychak & Motuzka, 2023).

The productivity of virtual teams depends on multiple factors, including team members’ adaptation to remote work, their level of IT competence, and the organization’s ability to ensure high-quality communication (Bei & Synychenko, 2024). Productivity is also influenced by leadership’s ability to create an environment that fosters effective teamwork, taking into account individual needs and communication efficiency. Psychological safety, in which team members feel trust and freedom to express their ideas, plays a vital role in enhancing creativity and overall team performance (Buffer, 2023).

Leadership in virtual teams focuses on establishing conditions for autonomous work, where rapid response and high levels of independence among team members are essential. Leaders delegate a significant portion of their authority to facilitate agile decision-making, which requires a high level of trust (Hrynychak & Motuzka, 2023). The success of a virtual team largely depends on the leader’s ability to maintain a balance between delegating responsibilities and ensuring overall coordination and support for communication processes.

When considering war-influenced dispersed teams in the context of other types of remote teams, it is important to identify the specific characteristics that distinguish them. Comparing these characteristics allows for clear identification of differences that may impact team performance and management effectiveness in conditions of instability and external changes. In particular, for a detailed analysis of these aspects, Tab. 1 compares the key features of war-influenced dispersed teams and other types of remote teams, highlighting their main differences.

Tab. 1

Comparison of characteristics of war-influenced dispersed teams and other types of remote teams

Comparison criteria	War-influenced dispersed teams	Other types of remote teams
Context of formation	The team was formed due to external crisis circumstances, and the decision regarding distribution was unplanned, making it a consequence of stress.	Formed in advance as part of a business strategy, with members working from different locations using modern technologies.
Context of interaction	Members may work under crisis (lack of stable communication, security, or resources). The work in such teams may be accompanied by psychological tension due to uncertainty and personal loss.	Interaction occurs through clearly defined processes and communication tools, in stable conditions with the ability for a quick adaptation.
Psychological resilience	Psychological resilience is built through the joint overcoming of crises, but inequality of conditions can lead to conflicts and tension.	Psychological safety is key to effectiveness, fostering a trustful environment that encourages open communication and innovation.
Operational effectiveness	Decreased effectiveness due to stressful conditions and external factors, difficulties in meeting deadlines and achieving results.	Productivity depends on the development of IT competencies among participants, effective communication, and autonomy in quickly accomplishing tasks.
Leadership	The leader often serves as a coordinator and psychological mentor or mediator. Empathy and the ability to consider social, economic, and emotional factors influencing participants are crucial.	The leader provides more autonomy for decision-making, focusing on effective task management, communication support, and maintaining psychological safety.

Source: formed by the author

The comparison of characteristics reveals that the forced distribution of participants due to external circumstances creates specific challenges for functioning. War-influenced dispersed teams face additional stressors, such as situational instability, lack of security, and limited resources, which directly impact their performance. Other types of remote teams primarily encounter challenges related to organizational and technological aspects. For war-influenced dispersed teams, adapting to new conditions, maintaining cohesion, and establishing communication amidst external difficulties are especially important. This requires specific management approaches that provide psychological support and help sustain participant motivation.

In scientific literature, various studies explore the functioning of teams working remotely. For instance, Varis et al. (2023) examine the challenges of managing virtual teams in terms of motivation, interaction, communication, and logistics. Similarly, Ebrahim et al. (2009) identify key disadvantages associated with virtual teams.

This study highlights the main determinants shaping the challenges of war-influenced dispersed teams and the specific problems they encounter (Fig. 1).

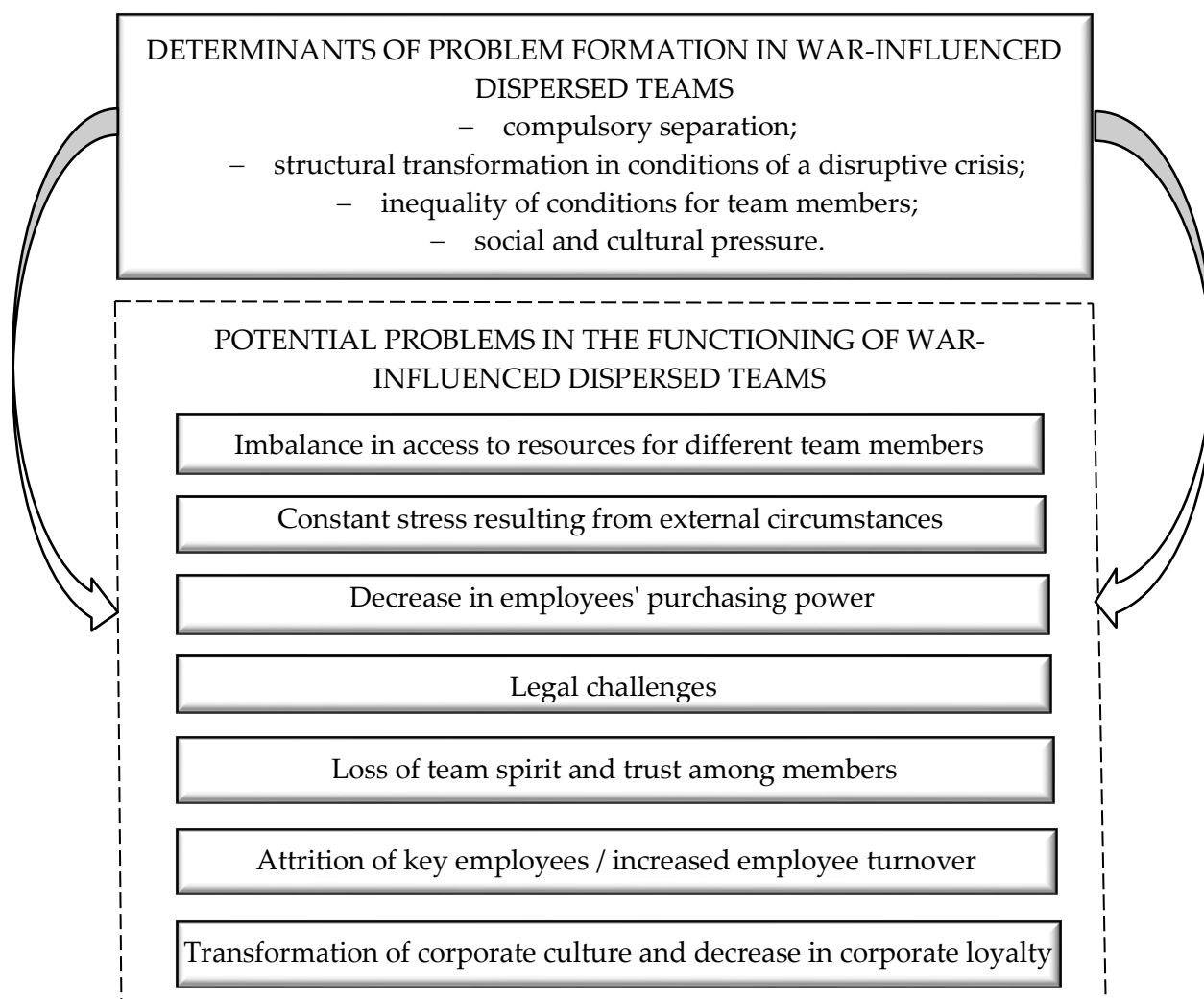


Fig. 1. Problem formation of war-influenced dispersed teams

Source: formed by the author

1. Compulsory separation. Teams were dispersed under external pressure, not as part of a planned transition. This forced format complicates stable work processes, as it doesn't account for the company's or employees' readiness. The lack of preparation leads to unstable work mechanisms, requiring extra effort to adjust.

2. Structural transformation during a crisis. Crises can prompt organizational development, but war-influenced dispersed teams were formed amidst a destructive crisis due to war. This creates significant resource depletion, weakening the company and hindering recovery. The rebuilding process may be complex and lead to long-term instability.

3. Inequality in working conditions. Employees are in vastly different conditions due to the war. Some work from safe regions with stable access, while others face combat zones and disruptions. While full equality is impossible, work approaches should be adapted to each group's specific circumstances.

4. Social and cultural pressure. During war, employees balance work with personal grief and high stress. Anxiety, loss, and the pressure of relocation can negatively impact work efficiency, further heightening stress in an already challenging environment.

The imbalance in access to resources among team members is evident in the significant disparity in working and living conditions between employees who remain in Ukraine and those who have relocated abroad. According to the Pan-European Study of Ukrainians in Europe (Rating Group, 2023), 87% of respondents reported higher income levels in Europe compared to Ukraine, 75% highlighted better social security, and 67% noted stronger protection of rights and freedoms. Additionally, the

security factor is unequivocally better for employees abroad, creating a substantial gap in stability and psychological well-being within the same team.

Chronic stress caused by external circumstances is a significant issue for employees remaining in Ukraine. According to the World Health Organization, one in four Ukrainians is at risk of developing mental health disorders due to the ongoing war (WHO, 2022). Key risks identified by experts include depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The persistent exposure to conflict-related stressors negatively affects cognitive functioning, decision-making, and overall work performance, creating additional challenges for teams operating in a hybrid or geographically dispersed environment.

The decline in employees' purchasing power is driven by both internal economic factors and differences in the cost of living abroad. When salaries are fixed in the national currency, the depreciation of the hryvnia and inflation reduce real income. The hryvnia depreciated by 43.8% from 29.25 UAH/USD at the beginning of 2022 to 42.05 UAH/USD at the beginning of 2025. Inflation in Ukraine has also contributed to this decline, reaching 26.6% in 2022, 5.1% in 2023, and an estimated 12% in 2024 (National Bank of Ukraine, 2025). Conversely, even when salaries are pegged to foreign exchange rates, employees residing abroad face significantly higher expenses for housing, transportation, healthcare, and utilities. This financial strain leads to decreased economic satisfaction and may negatively impact employee motivation and overall well-being.

Ukrainian employees who continue working for Ukrainian companies while residing abroad may face legal challenges related to their tax residency status. According to tax regulations, staying outside Ukraine for more than 183 days per year may result in the loss of Ukrainian tax residency and the obligation to pay taxes in the host country. To avoid double taxation, employees must monitor their residency status and, if necessary, periodically return to Ukraine (Bulai, 2023).

The psychological well-being of employees in business organizations faces significant risks during wartime. Research indicates that proximity to conflict zones adversely affects employees' mental health (Sydorenko & Sysak, 2025), potentially leading to a deterioration in team cohesion and trust. This erosion of trust and collective morale can hinder effective collaboration and overall organizational performance.

The outflow of key employees and increased staff turnover present critical challenges for war-influenced dispersed teams during wartime. Employees working remotely from abroad, faced with significantly higher wages and more stable working conditions in host countries, may be compelled to transition to local employers. This dynamic heightens the risk of losing highly skilled professionals, thereby undermining team cohesion, increasing turnover rates, and disrupting organizational stability and performance.

The weakening of corporate culture in war-influenced dispersed teams arises from the reduced accessibility or complete absence of traditional mechanisms for fostering corporate values, such as informal gatherings, team events, and the celebration of organizational achievements. The lack of physical presence and close communication can lead to a diminished sense of identification with the organization and a weakened feeling of belonging. As a result, employees may become less inclined to adhere to corporate norms and values, ultimately eroding the overall organizational culture, reducing loyalty, and negatively impacting productivity.

An adequate response to the challenges faced by war-influenced dispersed teams is the development and implementation of a comprehensive management model that accounts for the specific conditions of crisis and geographic distribution. This model should incorporate several key elements to mitigate the negative impact of these challenges on team effectiveness (Fig. 2).

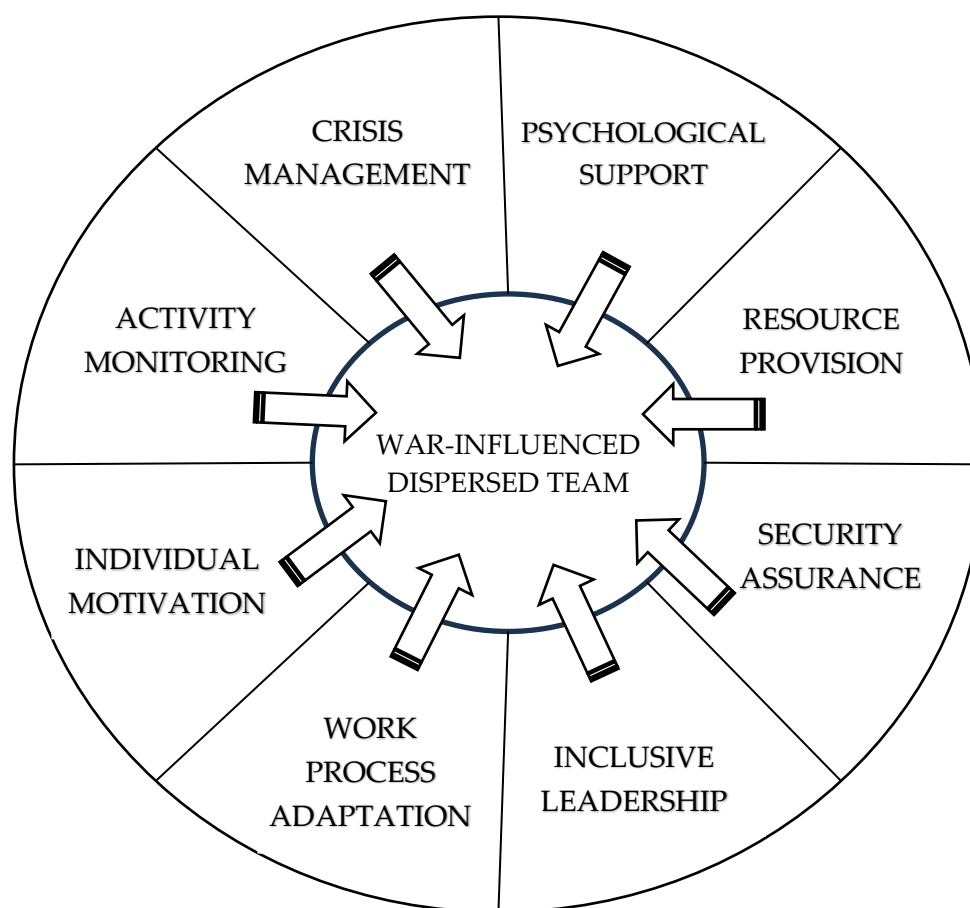


Fig. 2. Management model for war-influenced dispersed teams

Source: formed by the author

Such a model should incorporate several key elements to mitigate the negative impact of these challenges on team effectiveness. Specifically, crisis management will enable a swift response to changes in the external environment, ensuring the rapid adaptation of operational strategies. Psychological support and inclusive leadership will create the necessary conditions for maintaining a positive team climate, sustaining motivation, and fostering trust among team members, even in the absence of physical presence.

Resource provision and ensuring employee safety are also critical, as unstable working conditions may introduce additional risks to team operations. Adapting work processes to a remote format will help maintain efficiency and reduce the risk of desynchronization among team members. Individual motivation, both financial and non-financial, should be tailored to the specific circumstances of each employee in their country of temporary residence, taking into account both social and economic factors. Performance monitoring will allow for the assessment of implemented measures and timely adjustments to management strategies.

This comprehensive management model will contribute to maintaining team stability and minimizing the risk of fragmentation, even under crisis conditions.

The specific proposed directions for implementing the management model for war-influenced dispersed teams, considering the needs of different employee groups, are presented in Tab. 2.

Directions for implementing the management model of war-influenced dispersed teams

Direction of team management	Category of employees in war-influenced dispersed teams		
	Those who are moved abroad	Those who have changed regions within Ukraine	Those who stay at the place of permanent residence
Crisis management	Communication regarding changes in legislation or migration conditions	Regular safety monitoring; reliable communication channels, swift communication in case of attacks or heightened threats	
Psychological support	Adaptation support to new social conditions	Support programs for adapting to the new environment and restoring a sense of safety	Creating a safe working environment and providing resources to cope with stress
Resource provision	Providing technical equipment; compensation for setup costs	Providing employees with equipment, internet, or other resources to work in unstable conditions. Organizing mobile offices in regions with a significant presence of team members	
Security assurance	Risk assessment and minimization of relocation country risks	Tracking technologies; physical safety support	
Inclusive leadership	Transparency in communications, trust support Openness to feedback, understanding of unique challenges		
Work process adaptation	Use of tools for asynchronous work		
	Support for access to platforms restricted by local legislation	Flexible schedule due to the risks of electricity or internet interruptions	
Individual motivation (financial)	Partial reimbursement of relocation costs (housing, utilities)	Assistance with settling in the new location: temporary housing, transportation costs	Guarantee of stable salary payments even in emergency situations
Individual motivation (non-financial)	Regular public recognition of the efforts of employees working under difficult conditions abroad	Recognition of the efforts of employees who have adapted to new circumstances and continue working despite challenges	Support for employees remaining in higher-risk conditions through public recognition of their contributions
Activity monitoring	Use of online platforms for performance monitoring; communication tools as the basis for activity monitoring; regular one-on-one meetings for feedback		

Source: formed by the author

The implementation of the proposed management model for war-influenced dispersed teams will help maintain team stability and effectiveness, even in challenging conditions. Addressing the specific needs of each employee group, providing psychological support, adapting work processes to a remote format, and offering individual motivation will contribute to maintaining a positive team climate, high productivity, and trust among participants. Combined with crisis management and a focus on safety and resource provision, this model will enable swift adaptation to changes and minimize risks to team operations. Ultimately, the implementation of this model will create conditions in which geographical

dispersion will not lead to team disintegration but rather foster its long-term resilience and effectiveness, ensuring stability and adaptability in complex circumstances.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The article introduces the concept of war-influenced dispersed teams as a distinct type of collective that transitioned to remote work during wartime, with participants now based in different areas. Identifying the key characteristics of such teams in comparison to other types of remote teams helps to better understand their functioning and develop effective management approaches. The article also outlines the main determinants shaping the challenges faced by these teams and highlights the key managerial issues involved.

The developed model for managing war-influenced dispersed teams takes into account key directions for its implementation, including crisis management, psychological support, resource provision, security assurance, inclusive leadership, and work process adaptation. Additionally, the importance of individual motivation, both financial and non-financial, is emphasized as a means to increase employee engagement and performance. Special attention is given to activity monitoring to assess team members' contributions and ensure prompt responses to potential issues.

The discussed approaches and proposed management model provide valuable recommendations for organizations aiming to enhance the effectiveness of war-influenced dispersed teams in crisis situations, particularly during wartime. Further research should focus on examining the role of team leaders, particularly their strategic, motivational, and support functions in the context of complex and unstable conditions.

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Volodymyr Voloboiev, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor of the Department of Entrepreneurship and Management, Zaporizhzhia Institute of Economics and Information Technologies, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine;

ORCID ID: 0009-0006-3163-4219

Address: Volodymyr Voloboiev, Zaporizhzhia Institute of Economics and Information Technologies, 16-B, Kyjashka Str, Zaporizhzhia, 69041, Ukraine.

E-mail: v.voloboiev@econom.zp.ua

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню управління командами, розподіленими під впливом війни. Військова агресія призвела до вимушеного переміщення трудових колективів, що створює унікальні виклики для ефективного менеджменту організацій та команд. Мета статті полягає у розробці комплексних підходів до управління командами, учасники яких змушені перебувати в різних регіонах через наслідки військової агресії, з урахуванням кризових умов, географічної дисперсії та специфічних потреб працівників.

В статті пропонується термін “команди, розподілені під впливом війни”, аналізуються особливості роботи таких команд, проведено порівняння з іншими типами віддалених команд, що дозволило виділити унікальні характеристики, що впливають на продуктивність та ефективність управління командами в умовах нестабільності. Автор виділяє детермінанти формування проблем команд, розподілених під впливом війни: примусове розділення команд, структурна трансформація під час кризи, нерівність умов праці та соціально-культурний тиск. В статті аналізуються потенційні проблеми таких команд.

Наукова новизна роботи полягає в розробці моделі управління для команд розподілених під впливом війни, яка враховує специфічні умови кризи та географічного розподілу та складається з таких елементів: антикризове управління, забезпечення безпеки, психологічну підтримку, інклюзивне лідерство, забезпечення ресурсами, адаптацію робочих процесів до віддаленого формату та індивідуальну мотивацію для кожної групи співробітників, в залежності від їх місцезнаходження та моніторинг діяльності. Запропоновані напрямки імплементації моделі з урахуванням потреб різних груп працівників.

Практичне значення отриманих результатів полягає в розробці конкретних рекомендацій щодо управління командами, розподіленими під впливом війни, що дозволяє ефективно підтримувати їх стабільність і продуктивність. Запропонована модель надає лідерам команд інструменти для адаптації до нових реалій, а також організації ефективної роботи в умовах кризи. Зокрема, ці рекомендації можуть бути використані для налаштування внутрішніх процесів в компаніях, що мають віддалених співробітників або команди, які переміщуються в умовах війни, сприяючи збереженню корпоративної культури, зниженню рівня стресу та психологічного тиску на працівників.

Ключові слова: географічно розподілені команди, командний менеджмент, віддалена робота, переміщення трудових ресурсів.