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Relocation of Belarusian IT Workers to Poland after 2020: Organizational Strategies and Perspectives

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the relocation of Belarusian IT workers to Poland after the 2020 political crisis, focusing on how companies have supported this process through relocation theory and Perceived Organizational Support (POS). The study reviews two major Belarusian IT companies: one, a multinational software firm, and the other, a developer of mobile games, both kept anonymous for security reasons. The research identifies key support measures, including visa help, financial aid, housing, and career development, while noting major challenges like logistical problems, psychological stress, and financial limits faced by employees. Company 1's seniority-based support led to dissatisfaction among junior employees, while Company 2's equal approach had mixed results. The findings stress the need for tailored support, fair financial aid, and proactive communication to improve POS. This study adds to the literature on organizational support and talent mobility by offering strategies for managing employee relocations during crises.

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Keywords: Relocation, Belarusian IT workers, Perceived Organizational Support, Organizational strategies, Political crisis

Resumo

Esta dissertação explora a deslocalização de trabalhadores de TI bielorrussos para a Polónia após a crise política de 2020, centrando-se na forma como as empresas apoiaram este processo através da teoria da deslocalização e do apoio organizacional percebido (POS). O estudo analisa duas grandes empresas bielorrussas de TI: uma, uma empresa multinacional de software, e a outra, uma empresa de desenvolvimento de jogos para telemóvel, ambas mantidas no anonimato por razões de segurança. A investigação identifica as principais medidas de apoio, incluindo a ajuda para a obtenção de vistos, a ajuda financeira, o alojamento e a progressão na carreira, ao mesmo tempo que assinala os principais desafios, como os problemas logísticos, o stress psicológico e os limites financeiros enfrentados pelos trabalhadores. O apoio da Empresa 1, baseado na antiguidade, levou à insatisfação dos trabalhadores mais jovens, enquanto a abordagem igualitária da Empresa 2 teve resultados mistos. Os resultados sublinham a necessidade de um apoio adaptado, de uma ajuda financeira justa e de uma comunicação proactiva para melhorar o POS. Este estudo contribui para a literatura sobre apoio organizacional e mobilidade de talentos, oferecendo estratégias para gerir a deslocalização dos trabalhadores durante as crises.

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Título da dissertação: Deslocalização de trabalhadores bielorrussos de TI para a Polónia após 2020: Estratégias e Perspectivas Organizacionais

Palavras-chave: Deslocalização, trabalhadores de TI bielorrussos, Apoio organizacional percebido, Estratégias organizacionais, Crise política

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Introduction

The whole world saw the outbreak of the 2020–2021 Belarusian protests, a widespread series of political demonstrations against the government of Belarus and President Alexander Lukashenko. These protests, the largest in the country's history, erupted before and during the 2020 presidential election, during which Lukashenko sought to secure his sixth term. The demonstrations resulted in the defeat of the democratic movement. However, another groundbreaking event, mainly the War in Ukraine, worsened the situation. According to Gennady Korshunov, a respected Belarusian sociologist and former director of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, around 600,000 Belarusians have left the country since 2020, 6.5% of the total population. Around 113,000 migrated to Poland, a country that provided humanitarian opportunities for Belarusians, such as Humanitarian national visas for persecuted individuals or the Poland Business Harbour (PBH) program for businesses (Solidarnasc, 2024). Issues like political crackdowns, sanctions on Belarus, challenges in logistics, and business partners backing away from working with Belarusian firms because of Russia's hostility towards Ukraine have pushed numerous Belarusian companies, particularly those in the tech industry, to consider moving their operations elsewhere (Marozau, 2023). Among the individuals who emigrated, IT workers were a striking example of a massive brain drain since, for some time before the abovementioned events, the IT industry was one of the leading ones in Belarus. The wages of Belarusian programmers were higher than in many other professions, and this sector attracted investments from and worked with multiple Western companies (Euroradio, 2023). The Belarusian Government had hidden official statistics, so there is only one figure about the number of IT workers who moved abroad found by the primary Belarusian IT-related media Dev.by – over 20,000+ (Dev.by, 2022b).

This dissertation examines the relocation of Belarusian IT workers through the relocation and Perceived Organizational Support (POS) theory to provide new insights into the dynamics of organizational support during times of crisis. A psychologist and researcher of POS theory Harry Levinson stated that during any crisis situation, people begin to rely on institutions (1965). That is the primary goal of any organization. With regard to the topic of the corporate environment, this reliance creates the reciprocity concept, which means the reciprocal or mutual dependence of the company on their workers (since their success, according to the theory, depends on the employees). It also means that the workers rely on the company in low-risk or high-risk environments. This is the core of Perceived Organizational Support theory

(Eisenberger, 2020). Specifically, the thesis studies how particular organizational behaviors and decisions influence the employees' perceived organizational support, or the extent to which they believe the organization cares about them. The research gap is that only a few academic studies applied POS theory to companies under risky and vulnerable conditions (Bradley & Cartwright, 2002; Byrne, Z. S., & Hochwarter, 2006; Väyrynen & Uusiautti, 2018). such as in the Belarusian case. Research on Belarusian IT workers relocating to Poland after 2020 points out another big area that lacks research. Most works on the topic belong to the sociology and political science researchers. A few authors write about businesses, but they mainly focus on quantitative research related to the challenges IT employees faced during relocation. One significant reason for the lack of information is that these events are relatively recent. In-depth academic research requires time, so the studies on these developments are still in their early stages.

The research investigates the relocation of Belarusian IT workers to Poland after 2020, focusing on two prominent companies: Company 1, a multinational provider of software engineering and IT consulting services, and Company 2, which creates mobile games, that are anonymized due to security concerns. Company 1 has around 2,000 employees across Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Company 2's total number of employees is over 3,700, also spread from North America and Europe to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. The study aims to identify the fundamental support mechanisms, challenges, and their impacts on the perceived organizational support of these relocated employees. The limited research on POS in times of stress, particularly in the context of political crises, underscores the significance of this study.

The study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What organizational support mechanisms can be effective in contributing to the satisfaction of IT workers relocated because of the political crisis?**
- 2) What are the challenges Belarusian IT workers face during the relocation process to Poland, and how do these challenges impact their perceived organizational support?**

Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the Belarusian IT industry, detailing its growth, achievements, and the impact of the 2020 political crisis on the sector. Chapter 2 presents a literature review on relocation and POS theory, provides perspectives of different academics on Belarusian relocation and migration, and explains the choice of theories in the

literature review summary. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach of this study, data collection, and critical ethical considerations that became one of the main concerns during this research process. Chapter 4 focuses on the empirical findings related to the relocation experiences of Company 1's employees, while Chapter 5 centers on Company 2. In its turn, Chapter 6 offers a comparative analysis of the support mechanisms and challenges faced by employees from both companies. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation with a summary of findings, implications for theory and practice that include recommendations for the companies on how to organize the relocation of workers so that POS would increase, and recommendations for future research.

This thesis' findings can be applied to any company, not only the IT sector. This research contributes to the literature on organizational support and talent mobility, offering helpful strategies for companies facing similar challenges in volatile environments. Writing this research required intense work on ethical considerations because the participants could be politically persecuted in Belarus if their anonymity is not preserved. Thus, the thesis provides a unique insight for the companies that will once need to relocate their workers during critical times.

Chapter 1. Overview of Belarusian IT industry

This chapter explores the remarkable growth and success of the Belarusian IT sector. It details the strategic initiatives and benefits of the High Technology Park, which have attracted significant foreign and local investments. It also highlights the achievements of key companies within the HTP, their contributions to the Belarusian economy, and the industry's impact on Belarus' global tech reputation. This comprehensive overview sets the stage for understanding the dynamics of the Belarusian IT industry and the influence of the revolution attempt in 2020 and of the War in Ukraine in 2022 on the companies, the country and the IT specialists.

1.1. The IT sector in Belarus

To start with, the Belarusian IT industry has always been based on outsourcing and was functioning under the Indian model (offshore programming) (Lavrova, 2007). This term refers to the production of custom software for a foreign company. Such software is not a product; proprietary rights to intellectual property belong to the customer. This also means that the primary source of income for the IT companies in Belarus was their talent because exactly IT specialists developed the products for the clients of Belarusian companies. The high regional reputation of Belarusian IT, supported by favorable conditions for High Technology Park residents, attracted investments and outsourcing contracts. Outsourcing companies have driven growth, established training centers, supported technological research, and financed innovation. This boosted domestic IT projects, increased profit margins, and benefited traditional sectors through digitization and improved efficiency (Oginskaya, 2021).

There were several reasons why this industry demonstrated strong performance. First, because of the special treatment given to IT companies, even though the rest of the private sector in Belarus faced many restrictions. The Belarusian IT industry was built on Soviet heritage through the expertise and infrastructure developed by institutions like the Minsk Computer Equipment Production Association, which produced the first Soviet personal computers in the 1980s. For example, companies such as "NPP Belsoft" were founded by employees from Soviet-era research institutes and initially relied on technologies and knowledge inherited from their Soviet past before evolving into modern IT businesses (Alachnovič, 2023). The Belarusian IT industry, rooted in Soviet heritage, began to rise in 2005 with the signing of Decree No.12 "On the High Technology Park" (HTP) by the President of Belarus (Lavrinenko, 2020). The

HTP, often dubbed by Belarusian media “Silicon Valley of Eastern Europe” (Maksimenka, 2020; Goraeva, 2006), became a national pride (Dev.by, 2010). The HTP functioned extraterritorially, which means that international companies came to Belarus and registered as its residents. The HTP provided benefits such as exemption from income tax and VAT, reduced personal income tax for employees, and a range of import and local tax exemptions (HTP, 2024; Revera, 2019). Approximately half of the HTP's resident companies had foreign capital, while the other half was founded by Belarusian investors (Viltovsky and Kuznetsova, 2019). This established one of Central and Eastern Europe's most significant IT clusters (HTP, 2024). The first companies that were registered in the HTP came there in June 2006, and the HTP pursued active external promotion, negotiating with Bosch, Apple, and Microsoft, and securing contracts with companies from Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg, Japan, and Taiwan (Pavlova, et.al., 2013). This led to Asbis’, a company that develops and provides IT and IoT products, solutions, and services to the markets of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, listing on the Warsaw Stock Exchange in 2007. This achievement was the first such listing in the history of modern Belarus (Asbis, 2015). Also, in the same year, SAP, one of the world's leading manufacturers of software solutions for business process management, opened its office in Belarus (EY, 2017). Other successful companies emerged, such as Vizer Interactive with its popular games ‘Zombie Farm’ and ‘Klondike: The Lost Expedition’ (Vizer Games, 2024), and Wargaming.net with its blockbuster game World of Tanks, which set a Guinness World Record in 2011 on "Most players online simultaneously on one MMO server" (World of Tanks, 2024). Figure 1 demonstrates the rapid growth of the HTP over time since its inception.

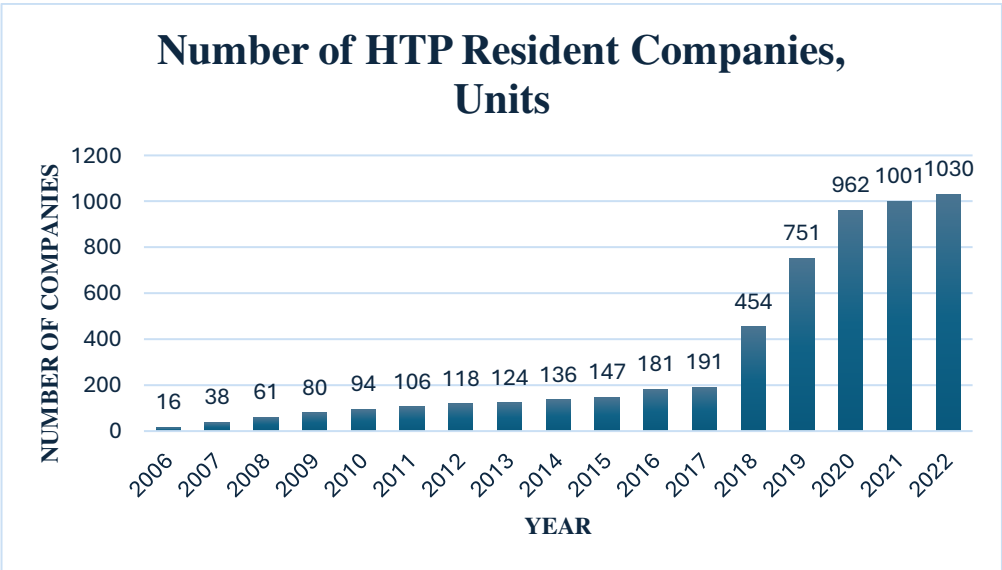


Figure 1: Number of HTP resident companies over time (2006 – 2022). Source: Belstat, 2021; HTP, 2024; Pavlova, et.al., 2013.

Another reason for the industry's success included the country's good quality of tech education and the cost-effectiveness of Belarusian IT developers (Alachnovic, 2023). Institutions like the Belarusian State University and the Belarusian National Technical University offered specialized IT programs, fostering a highly educated workforce that could compete internationally (Lashkevich, 2016). The rapidly growing IT job market, driven by high demand for top-tier programmers, has significantly shifted the mindset of an entire generation of Belarusians. Starting in 2013, every year, Belarusian participants won the Google Jam Code, an international programming competition organized by Google (Google Jam Code, 2022). It highlighted the country's strong programming talent and competitive edge in the global tech arena. Even at the beginning of the 2000s, many skilled tech graduates and professionals were leaving the country in pursuit of better opportunities and a higher quality of life. However, in 2016-2020, an increasing number of them chose to stay, drawn by the presence of global employers' local offices, competitive salaries linked to hard currencies, and a lower cost of living than the EU and the US. The number of offers for various non-academic coding training, courses, and boot camps for adults and kids reached the highest level in those years (Lashkevich, 2016). People were motivated by attractive salaries and many opportunities for their growth. The IT job market saw many applications from people with different professional backgrounds. As of 2019, more than 70,000 IT specialists were working in Belarus. The IT sector's wages exceeded the country's average wage level by 3-4 times in the same year (Aser and BIK Ratings, 2020).

Another essential feature of the Belarusian IT industry is its regional concentration in Minsk. Almost 80% of all ICT Gross Value Added (GVA) is created there, with the rest distributed relatively evenly among the country's six regions (Luzgina, 2023). In 2019, Russian CRM producer Bitrix24 composed the rating of regions in terms of using new technologies in business. Such parameters as the number of people employed in information and communication technologies (ICT), number of people employed in science, number of computer manufacturing companies, foreign direct investment in the information and communication category, foreign direct investment in the science and scientific activity category; gross added value of the ICT sector; net profit of the ICT sector; etc. were taken into account for business advancement in Belarusian cities (per 100,000 population). Figure 2

demonstrates the number of points each region got, i.e. cumulative rates. According to this figure, Minsk was the leader in the rating.

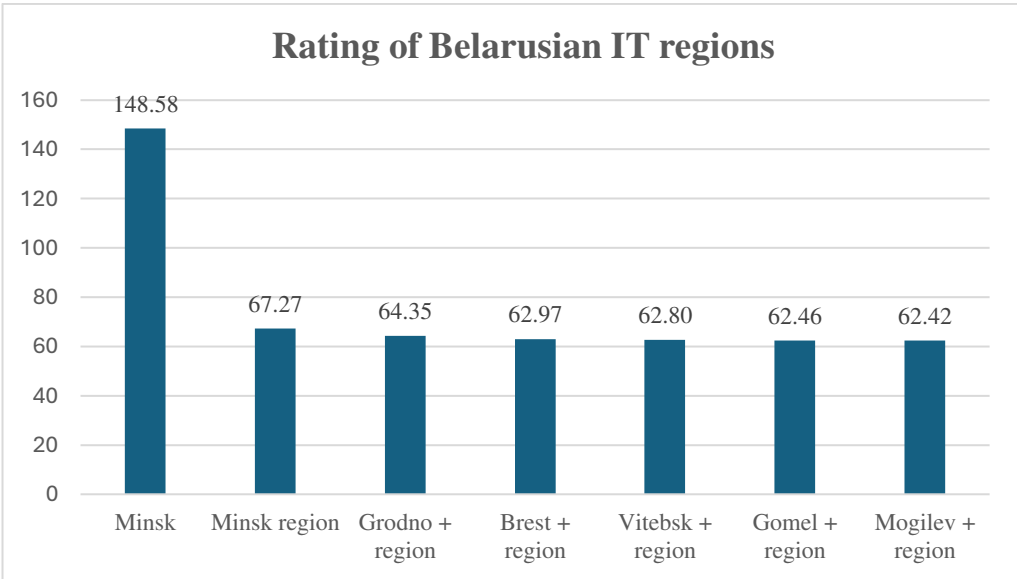


Figure 2 Rating of Belarusian IT regions. Source: Bitrix24, 2019.

For the reasons mentioned above, the IT industry's development led to the industry's sharpest growth between 2016 and 2021, when the sector experienced double-digit annual increase, averaging over 14% yearly. Decree No. 8, “On the Development of the Digital Economy,” dated December 2017, was signed to boost the IT industry (President of the Republic of Belarus, 2017). This led to HTP’s growth to a significant one-time increase, which can be noticed in Figure 1 above, starting in 2018 (Belta, 2018). By that same year, over 90% of HTP exports were to the EU and the US, contrasting Belarus’s broader economic reliance on Russia (Cooper, 2020). The IT sector comprised 60.5% outsourcing companies and 39.5% product developers, with EPAM Systems leading globally. Google and Yandex also opened development centers in Belarus (Murphy, 2020). By 2020, it contributed 5.8% to the gross value added (GVA), a significant increase from 3.0% in 2016. This rapid growth positioned the Information and Communication (IC) sector in Belarus among the largest in Europe in terms of its share of GDP. In 2021, Belarus's IC sector accounted for 7.4% of GDP, matching Estonia and surpassing all neighboring countries (Table 1).

Variable	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
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Number of companies in the ICT sector, Units	3,962	4,492	4,996	5,202	5,341	5,412	5,437
Of which IT industry	2,323	2,619	3,123	3,395	3,574	3,675	3,697
Combined headcount of ICT sector companies	85,405	92,206	100,655	111,316	118,778	125,279	119,799
Share of GVA of ICT sector in GDP (sector in GRP), %	4.5	5.2	5.6	6,5	7.3	7.5	6.6
Net profit in ICT sector, BYN million	997.4	1,105	1,451	1,956	2,666	2,550	2,265

Table 1: The ICT sector's share of the economy 2016-2022. Source: Belstat, 2021, Alakhnovich, 2023.

Belarus was part of a competitive IT region with Ukraine, Poland, and Romania, generating \$13 billion from IT service exports (See Figure 3). The region benefited from 200 universities educating new specialists, a vibrant startup scene, and significant players in mergers and acquisitions (Oginskaya, 2021).

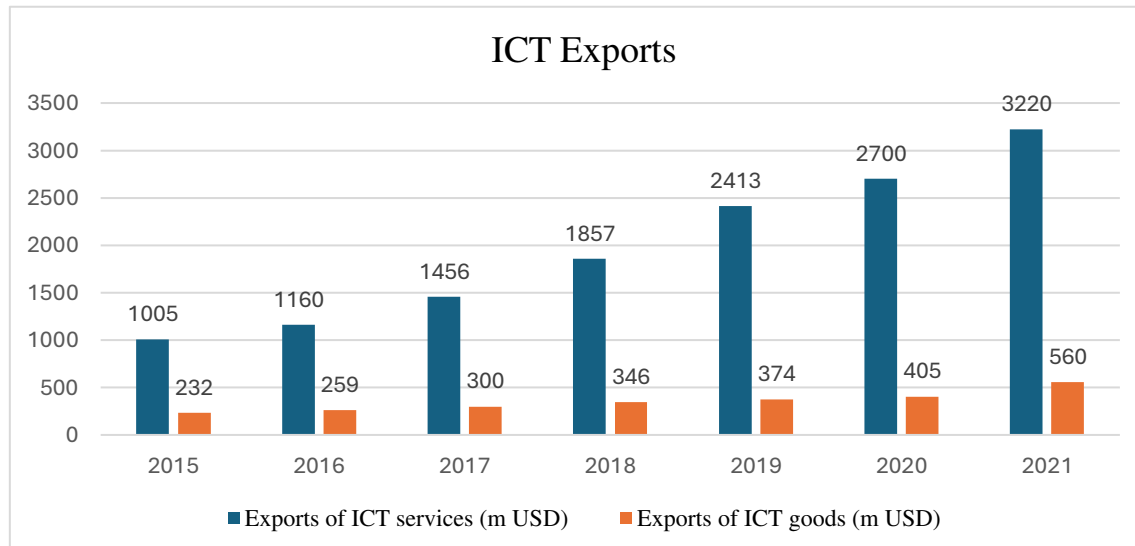


Figure 3: ICT Exports of the Republic of Belarus (2015-2021). Source: Alachnovic. 2023.

This short overview demonstrated how Belarus reached a level where six HTP resident companies were included in the Global Outsourcing 100 rating and Google was thinking of opening an office in Minsk (EY, 2017). The industry's success is very well documented in EY report (See Table 2), which created multiple lists of Belarusian companies listed in the world-rekknowned indexes and ratings.

Company	2006 Position	2006 Income (USD million)	2011 Position	2011 Income (USD million)	2016 Position	2016 Income (USD million)
IHS Inc.	-	-	74	898.00	63	2,184.34
EPAM Systems	272	40.00	181	222.00	107	904.70
Bell Integrator	-	-	-	-	213	234.25
IBA Group	-	-	278	76.00	281	110.85
Itransition	472	3.5	398	17.00	368	40.30

Table 2: Ranking and income of Belarusian Hi-Tech Park residents in the Software 500. Source: EY, 2017

Kanstantsin Lashkevich, editor-in-chief at dev.by, a leading tech news website in Belarus back then and now, once wrote in his opinion piece: “The world will become familiar with new made-in-Belarus products such as World of Tanks and MSQRD. Minsk will definitely see more R&D centers from well-known tech companies coming in the near future. Unless, of course, the Belarusian government changes the rules of the game for the IT sector, as has repeatedly happened before with other industries” (Lashkevich, 2016). Only four years passed since this statement, and just as he predicted, the government changed everything.

1.2 The consequences of the Belarusian revolution attempt in 2020 and the War in Ukraine for the Belarusian IT Industry

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, Belarusian IT achievements led to a thriving IT community. On August 9, 2020, Belarus held a presidential election, which was widely contested and led to mass protests after official results declared long-time incumbent Alexander Lukashenko as the winner amid widespread allegations of electoral fraud. The disputed election results triggered one of the largest political crises in Belarus's history, with ongoing demonstrations and a harsh crackdown by the government. The government's reaction led to numerous arrests and reports of police brutality (Rudnik, 2020). IT specialists were among the first to support the repressed, to be repressed themselves, and to leave the country (Radio Freedom, 2021). Online platform “Golos” created by IT specialists, played a key role in uncovering voter fraud during the 2020 elections (Golos, 2024). Tech companies strongly supported the protests. Internet shutdowns during the election resulted in significant losses for Belarusian IT companies (Human Constanta, 2020). Belarusian tech leaders publicly criticized

the violence, stating that “startups don't thrive in an environment filled with fear and hatred” (Belovolchenko, et.al., 2020, p. 1). These events caused massive political repressions that became an impulse for the first wave of migration. According to the Belarusian human rights center ‘Viasna’, as of August 23, 2024, there were 1,370 political prisoners in Belarusian prisons (Viasna, 2024). According to Wisevoter, a U.S.-based think tank founded in 2020, aimed at providing citizens, voters, and officials with tools and information to support democratic engagement, in 2023, Belarus ranked first in Europe regarding the number of prisoners per capita (Wisevoter, 2023). Viasna notes that the country "maintains a critically high level of repression against political opponents of the regime and dissidents." (Viasna, 2024) These conditions foster people to leave the country and become migrants.

Another massive migration wave for Belarusian IT workers happened after the start of the war in Ukraine. Belarusian authorities let Russian troops use Belarus' territory for the attack. This greatly influenced the image of Belarusian IT companies. European and American clients of Belarusian IT companies refused to work with them and started to shut down the projects (Kłysiński and Żochowski, 2023). One of the leading Belarusian media projects motolko.help that also actively covered the 2020 events in social media and is now claimed to be an extremist formation by the Belarusian government, asked ordinary Belarusians to file information about all companies that left the country right after the war started. Belarusians sent the information about the companies that they also worked before or just knew about from the public sources. The list included more than 159 enterprises, 100 of which included IT products, fintech projects, or games developers (Motoko.help, 2024).

From March to December 2022, IT firms saw a reduction of 17,200 employees, nearly 20% of the workforce (Luzgina, 2023). This drop is demonstrated in Figure 4. Between spring 2022 and October 2023, 170 firms exited the High-Tech Park, leading to the departure of over 22,000 IT professionals from Belarus and a \$140 million tax revenue loss. Average IT sector earnings dropped from \$3,300 in February 2022 to \$2,300 a year later, suggesting a migration of top talent (Dev.By, 2023). In 2022, the IT sector contracted by 2.2%, contrasting with 9.2% growth in 2021 (Luzgina, 2023).

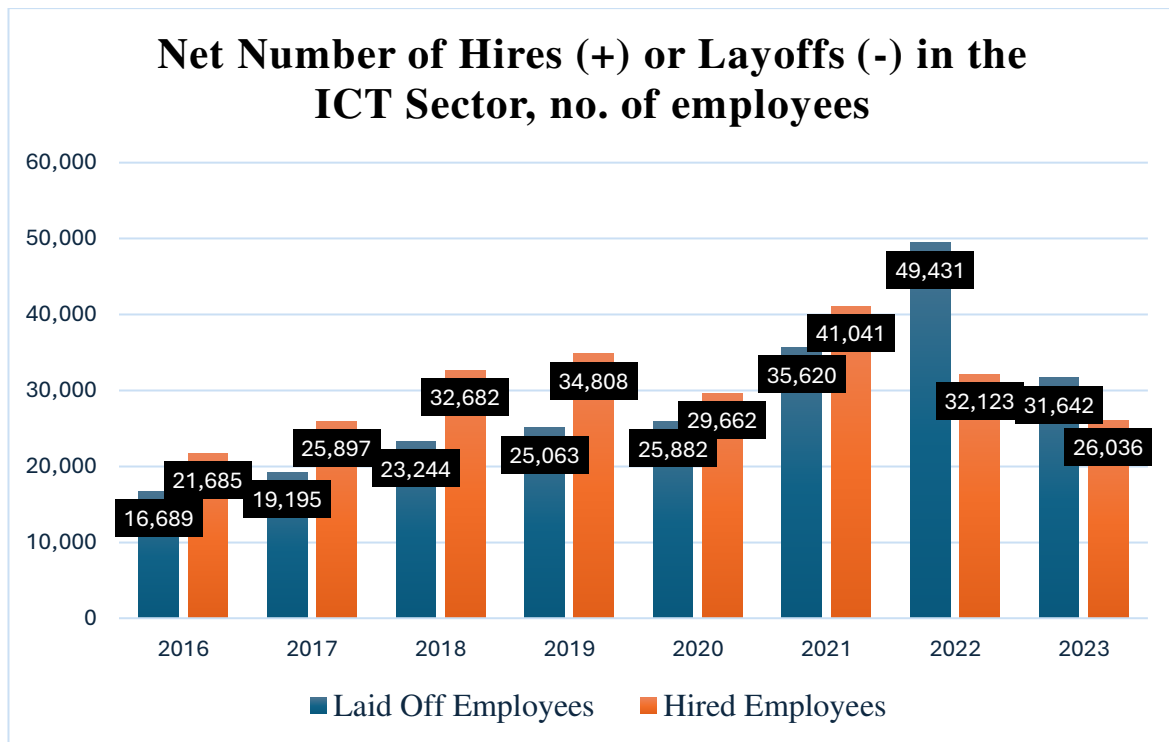


Figure 4 : Net Number of Hires (+) or Layoffs (-) in the ICT Sector; Thousands of People. Source: Belstat, 2024.

Prominent IT firms have shut down operations in Belarus. A Belarusian Researcher, Aleś Alachnovic expressed popular opinion that the IT sector is unlikely to recover until the government ceases support for Russia and resolves domestic political issues (Alachnovic, 2023). According to the study by Dev.by on migration of Belarusian IT workers (sample size is 2564), in 2021, 17.6% of research participants reported living abroad. In 2022, there was a jump to 47.7%. “By the end of 2023, the outflow rate has noticeably decreased. We will unlikely see more than 2-3% of industry personnel losses inside the country in 2024. But even this will lead to a ratio where there will be 1.5 times more active Belarusian specialists outside the country than inside,” writes Dev.by (Dev.by, 2024a).

The lack of precise official statistics makes it challenging for researchers to determine precisely how many Belarusians and IT workers have left the country since 2020. There has been a noticeable decline in the total Belarusian workforce. In 2020, the labor force consisted of 4.3 million individuals, but by 2022, this number had decreased to just over 4.2 million (Belstat, 2023). Although statistics from the destination countries of emigrants are more readily available, they paint a partial picture. However, it is estimated that at least 100,000 Belarusian citizens have emigrated, with the majority settling in Poland and Lithuania (Kłysiński, 2023). Other popular destinations included Georgia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, which had visa-free arrangements with Belarus.

1.3 Relocation of Belarusian IT companies to Poland

Poland has become a haven for Belarusians, offering humanitarian visas, asylum, and support through the Poland Business Harbour (PBH) program, which included assistance in starting a business, relocating employees and their families, and obtaining legal and visa support through a ‘business concierge.’ The program also assisted in liaising with local authorities and special economic zones in Poland, making office and residential space available to new arrivals and connecting entrepreneurs with investors and grants for research and development (Poland Business Harbour, 2024). According to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more than 44,000 Belarusians received visas for relocating qualified specialists and their families to Polish business harbor (PBH) in 2022 (Błaszczak, 2022). Nearly 10,000 Belarusians applied for another form of support initiated by the Polish government, namely humanitarian visas or asylum in Poland within the year 2020, seeking refuge and a more stable environment to live and work in (Poland Business Harbour, 2024). PBH was an integral element in formulating perceived organizational support among the employees of IT companies because it offered a structured and supportive environment for firms and their employees relocating to Poland. By helping with visas, work permits, and other bureaucratic processes, the program reduced the stress and uncertainty of relocation, making employees feel more valued and supported by their employers.

In 2022, 1,730 new companies with Belarusian capital appeared in Poland in a year. The top three sectors were wholesale and retail trade, transportation and logistics, and construction. The IT sector took fourth place (Danilchuk, 2023). In answering the question about the reasons for the popularity of Poland as a destination for relocation, a range of studies (Belarusian Investigative Centre, 2023; Chmiel, et.al, 2021; Naūrodski, 2022) state that together with more accessible bureaucratic procedures, factors such as the cultural proximity of Poland and Belarus and similar economic situations are also crucial. Deutsche Welle, a renowned German media outlet, conducted qualitative interviews with Belarusian IT specialists, and people supported the following opinion: “Poland suits Belarusians mentally. In addition, prices for housing and food in Poland are lower than in Western Europe, and salaries in the IT sector are approximately the same everywhere. In some other countries, we would have to look for opportunities for legalization and open a work visa” (Gargalyk, 2022). The cultural similarities may help ease the adaptation process, while the economic advantages, such as affordable living costs and competitive salaries, provide a solid incentive to relocate. Moreover, the ease of legal processes

in Poland compared to other countries makes it a more convenient and appealing option. These facts explain why Poland was one of Belarusians' most popular relocation destinations.

In conclusion, the Belarusian IT industry has experienced a dynamic journey from its roots in Soviet heritage to becoming a prominent player in the global technology sector. Establishing the High Technology Park (HTP) in 2005 was critical, driving significant growth and attracting international investment. This initiative bolstered the economy and positioned Belarus as a competitive IT hub in Eastern Europe. However, political unrest following the 2020 presidential elections severely impacted the industry, leading to an exodus of IT professionals and companies. Many sought refuge in neighboring countries like Poland, where programs such as PBH provided essential support for relocation and business continuity. Charles Darwin said, "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." That is the way Belarusian companies approached this crisis. While relocating their employees, they had to ensure that in the long term, they would increase their POS and keep the company on the same rails.

Chapter 2. Literature Review on Relocation and Perceived Organizational Support Theory

This literature review delves into the multifaceted relocation process and explores the concept of POS theory. The review begins by defining relocation, tracing its development over time, and examining its various forms and implications for organizations and employees. It then explores the motivations behind relocation, emphasizing the connection between relocation and migration decisions, and introduces a range of approaches to talent mobility studies. The discussion further narrows to the specific case of Belarusian IT professionals, considering both local and international perspectives on their migration patterns. The review also examines POS theory, highlighting its significance in understanding employee well-being and organizational effectiveness, particularly in high-stress environments such as forced relocations. This analysis sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how organizations can effectively support their employees through relocation processes, ensuring organizational resilience and employee satisfaction. Finally, the summary of findings sets the stage for the methodology chapter by explaining why these particular theories were chosen for this thesis.

2.1. Relocation Definition

The central process of this thesis is relocation of employees. Therefore, it is crucial to give it a proper definition. From a research perspective, studying company relocations roots back to 1962, when Wendy Luttrell, a British researcher in the field of sociology associated with the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) in the UK, mentioned that firms rarely considered moving to new locations (Luttrell, 1962). While there were some earlier studies on this topic (like Hadley, 1950), the in-depth examination of company relocations started in the 1970s, mainly in the United Kingdom (Pellenbarg et. al., 2002). The first detailed definitions of company relocations also came from this decade. For instance, in 1976, Townroe (1976) described it as moving a company, which includes shutting down the old place and starting at a new one. This move might involve transferring some or all operations from the old site to the new one, sometimes to make room for expanding or adding new products at the original location (Knoben and Oerlemans, 2005).

One of the most widely accepted definitions states that relocation is moving an employee from one location of the organization to another, as stated by Pinder and Walter (1987). Martin (1999) refers to *relocation* as “a process of a simultaneous job and geographical move”. In

other words, the relocation of employees refers to the process of transferring an employee from one location to another, often due to business needs or organizational strategy. This move may involve a change in city, region, or even country and typically includes logistical support and resources to help the employee adjust to their new environment. Relocation can be temporary or permanent and is often initiated to address talent needs, expand business operations, or optimize workforce distribution. Relocation involves changes in the living and working environment, leading to various outcomes for both the organization and the individual (Sagie et.al., 2001). Relocation has its costs, and improper management can lead to significant losses for both individuals and the organization. Organizations face costs and potential dips in productivity during the move (Eby & Allen, 1998; Brett & Feldman, 1985), while individuals might experience stress and face practical challenges like commuting or enrolling in educational programs (Martin, 1995; Martin et. al., 2000; Matthiesen, 2005; Sikora, et. al., 2004). These challenges can be even more significant when the relocation is international (Kühlmann et. al., 2017). As a result, despite the potential benefits, there is sometimes a reluctance to relocate (Feldman and Tompson, 1993; Saunders & Thornhill, 1998), even though relocation itself is not necessarily a negative experience.

The research on firm relocation divides the process into two types: complete relocation, involving the transfer of an entire establishment to a new site, and partial relocation, where a new branch is created in connection with an existing one that continues to operate (Brouwer et. al., 2004). Some theorists state that relocation can happen within a country (internal), between countries (external), or even within a specific group (intra-group). Internal relocation involves moving experts from one part of the country to another (Brouwer et. al., 2004; Moyle & Parkes, 1999; Oliveira, 2015; Pellenbarg et. al., 2002). There is another categorization provided by the European Parliament (Györffi & Oren, 2006), which describes relocation based on where the business activities are based (within the home country or in a foreign country) and how these activities are handled (either managed by the company itself or outsourced to external organizations). Relocation involves a high risk due to different aspects that must be considered: costs, resources, new market's legislation, R&D potential, fiscal incentives provided by the authorities, infrastructure and so on. The multitude of factors, coupled with their ever-changing and diverse nature, makes the decision to relocate a complex one. Consequently, companies are striving to alleviate the impact of this process on employees by offering comprehensive support in the form of relocation packages, as it was done by both companies in this thesis (Gheorghe & Panazan, 2021). Matthew Bidwell, Wharton school professor, who studied patterns of work

and employment together with his colleague Martin Haas (Haas & Bidwell, 2023) wrote about duality of consequences of relocation saying that it can be exciting and beneficial for a worker’s self-development and risky and taking a person out of their comfort zone. Such changes often lead to feelings of worry and uncertainty, which can be stressful and result in psychological, physical, and behavioral issues. How well people adjust depends on how different their old and new environments are (Brett, 1982; Hui et al., 2003; Pinder & Schroeder, 1987).

2.2. Motivations for Relocation

2.2.1. Relocation in the Context of Migration Decisions

Relocation is deeply interconnected with the term migration and is often considered as its subset. Migration generally means moving to a new place to live, either for a long time (up to 5 years) or permanently (Lee, 1966). European Parliament provided the following definition: “Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, to settle in a new location” (European Parliament, 2023). Every time someone migrates, no matter the distance or how hard it is, there are always three things involved: where these people are coming from, where they are going to, and the challenges in between. Considering the context of this thesis, special attention has to be paid to job-related migration. Many people, as well as companies, move for work. Still, there are other reasons people move – seeking asylum, escaping danger, as in Belarus, or joining a family – and countries have different rules to handle it.

Table 3 shows the differing perspectives on migration. When it comes to job-related migration, the topic is studied mainly by scientists mainly from the fields of organizational psychology and sociology.

Field of Research	Focus	Description	Researchers
Economics	Pull and push factors	Migration is driven by three key factors: the attractive qualities of the destination (demand-pull), the push factors from the home area (supply-push), and the connections between the home and destination (network factors).	Bean and Brown (2014); Castles and Miller (1998); Ibrahim, et.al (2019); Urbański (2022).
Psychology	Personality factors	People's personalities play a big role in their decision to move to	Clark, et. al. (2023);

		another country. Those who want to move are usually more focused on their work, have a greater desire to achieve and be in charge, but are less interested in making social connections and value family less compared to those who choose to stay in their home country.	Bilsborrow (2012); Fouarge, et.al.(2019); Jokela (2009); Milfont, et.al. (2015); Huu (2021).
Sociology	Process of chain migration	Migration tends to catalyze further migration. An initial migrant often transmits information regarding employment opportunities, residential options, and educational facilities to individuals in the origin area, thereby influencing subsequent migration decisions.	Constant and Zimmerman (2003); Helmenstein and Yegorov (2000); MacDonald and MacDonald (1964);
Anthropology	Changes in the standard of living and culture	Personal stories from recent immigrants and media portrayals of a country's quality of life often attract individuals to immigrate, seeking improved living conditions.	Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014); Hagberg and Ouattara, (2012); USC Annenberg (2020);
Politics	Political reasons	Nations might promote emigration to mitigate ethnic tensions or to extend their influence abroad by strategically relocating specific ethnic populations, whether by choice or compulsion.	Bygnes and Filipo (2016); Schaeffer (2010).

Table 3: Studies of Migration. Source: Martiniello and Rath, 2012.

Table 3 presents an overview of the different academic perspectives on migration, highlighting how various fields study this complex phenomenon. Economists focus on "pull and push factors," analyzing how economic conditions and networks drive migration, while psychologists examine "personality factors," emphasizing the traits that influence an individual's decision to migrate. Sociologists explore the "process of chain migration," where initial migrants influence others to follow, and anthropologists look at how "changes in standard of living and culture" attract migrants through personal stories and media. Lastly, political scientists consider "political reasons" for migration, such as governments promoting emigration for strategic purposes. This table demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of migration studies

and the diverse factors that shape migration patterns. A researcher in the fields of development economics, international economics, and migration studies, Andrés Solimano (Solimano, 2003), states that international migration often reflects the economic and social situations in the countries, which people leave compared to other places. When a government provides poor economic growth, lack of jobs, or doesn't protect people's rights well, its citizens are more likely to leave. Thousands of Belarusian tech workers leaving the country due to lacking fundamental freedoms demonstrate this in practice (Van Blommestein, 2022). On the other hand, if a country offers good job prospects and welcomes migrants, it will attract people from different countries, as in this thesis, is presented by the case of Poland accepting migrants from the whole post-soviet space.

2.2.2. Talent Management and Talent Mobility

It is essential to introduce talent-related theories since Talent Mobility deals explicitly with the processes and strategies that facilitate the movement of employees across different locations. The thesis examines the practical aspects of this mobility, such as logistical challenges, visa processes, and the impact of these on employees' perceptions of organizational support. Organized relocation is a part of any company's strategic move and a big challenge for the company's workforce. Relocation often requires enormous effort from the HR department (Dev.by, 2022c). The perception of talent management among researchers differs. Talent Management is often called "a mindset" (Ariss, 2014), a tool that facilitates effective succession planning (Cheloha & Swain, 2005), and the process of identification and development of talented individuals within organizations (Redford, 2005). There are three main directions of talent mobility in business: *career mobility* (moving people across skill sets or roles); *geographic mobility* (moving people to where the jobs are located) and *job mobility* (moving jobs to where the right talent is located) (Capelli, 2008). Active researcher of talent mobility Solimano (2006) emphasizes that talent, a key economic resource and source of creative power across various fields, has an intrinsic economic value that has been increasingly mobilized due to globalization, advancements in information technologies, and reduced transportation costs. He also provides a definition to the technical talent (TT), which refers to individuals with specialized expertise in sectors such as information technology (IT), telecommunications, and computer science. Typically, they possess degrees from universities or advanced technical institutes in fields like mathematics, engineering, or computer science (D'Costa, 2004).

Table 4 gives an overview of the research on Talent Mobility and its main theories that describe different motivations behind mobility:

Theory	Description	Research
Rewards Structure Theory	The differences in compensation and rewards across countries and sectors act as a major driver for the mobility of skilled individuals. Talent tends to move from regions or sectors offering lower rewards to those promising higher earnings and benefits. This movement is not just about financial gains but also includes professional recognition and career advancement opportunities.	Bidwell and Briscoe, (2010); Buda, et.al., 1990; Burt (2004); Coff (1997); Florida (2002); Groyberg (2008); Saxenian (1996).
Linguistic Compatibility and Socio-Cultural Affinity	Talent mobility is facilitated when individuals share linguistic and cultural ties with the destination country. Theory suggests that skilled workers are more likely to migrate to countries where language and culture reduce the barriers to integration and adaptation, making the transition smoother and potentially more rewarding both personally and professionally.	Chiswich and Miller (2008); Chiu, et.al (2008); Fitzsimmons, et.al. (2011); Froese (2011); Harzing and Pudelko (2013); Lauring and Selmer (2012); Tung (2008).
Shortage and Visa Policy Theory	Highlights how the demand for specific skills in certain countries, coupled with immigration policies that favor skilled workers, influences talent mobility patterns. Countries facing shortages in certain professional fields may implement visa policies that attract foreign talent, thereby addressing domestic skill gaps while offering skilled individuals opportunities for mobility.	Campbell and Tham (2011); Czaika and Parsons (2017); Docquier and Rapoport (2012); Kerr, et. al. (2016); Scachar, (2006).
Education and Talent Allocation	The level and quality of education influence the mobility of talent. Higher educational attainment not only increases an individual's mobility prospects but also affects their choice of destination. This is based on the recognition and value of educational credentials across different markets and the correlation between education and career opportunities in a global context.	Carnegie and Tuck (2010); Caruso and De Wit (2014); Docquier and Marfouk (2005); Florida, et. al. (2008); Iredale (2008); Sjaastad (1962).

<p>Political Determinants</p>	<p>Economy</p> <p>The political and economic stability of a country, along with its governance quality, directly impacts its attractiveness to international talent. Skilled individuals are drawn to countries with stable, democratic governance and robust legal protections for workers, where the political and economic environment supports career development and personal growth.</p>	<p>Beine, et. al., (2011); Borjas (1987); Clemens (2014); Dockuier (2007); Kapur and McHale (2005); Saxenian (2005).</p>
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Table 4: Talent Mobility Theories. Source: Martiniello and Rath, 2012

These theories highlight the importance of relocated workers' adaptation to the new environment from different angles and provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of this relocation and the motivations behind it. They also provide frameworks for analyzing the effectiveness of relocation strategies for Belarusian IT workers, highlighting how economic incentives, cultural compatibility, visa policies, and political stability influence talent mobility and perceived organizational support in crisis situations.

2.2.3. Relocation Motivations in Local Research

As mentioned before, relocation in Belarus has been studied mainly from the prism of migration of Belarusian talent abroad. There is a small number of studies on Belarusian migration after 2020 in Belarusian academic circles (Chmiel, et.al., 2021; Koreyko and Luzgina, 2023; Luckevich, 2023; Wildried Martens Centre, 2023). Researchers Sierż Naŭrodski (Naŭrodski, 2022), Dmitry Danilchuk (Danilchuk, 2023) in their multiple papers research the migration of Belarusian businesses. Naŭrodski (Naurodski, 2022) introduced term “business migration”, which highlights that migrants are a significant source of potential entrepreneurs and existing businesses in their new countries and tend to contribute positively to the fiscal balance in OECD nations. Also, Belarusian research centers, such as CASE Belarus (Chmiel, et.al., 2021) and BEROC (Kras'ko & Daneiko, 2022) concentrate not only on migration of businesses, but also include population migration. Belarus Research Centre BEROC conducted the study “Belarusian Business Abroad: Needs, Problems and Potential of Interaction within National Business Communities”, in which they stated that up until 2020, the emigration of business owners to Europe was situational, mainly influenced by individual owners’ factors. However, the political turmoil in 2020 and the intense crackdowns that followed quickly turned relocating abroad into a common strategy for businesses to keep going (Kras'ko & Daneiko, 2022). Belarusian media (Zerkalo, Dev.by, Deutsche Welle) with their multiple articles, opinion polls

and analytical papers on different aspects of the life of Belarusian society. Since the discussed events influenced the whole CIS region, this term is also widely studied in Russian (Evstratov, 2022, Panova and Schistlyeva, 2016, Kazantseva and Ostapenko, 2023) and Ukrainian (Tarasovsky, 2023, Klimchuk, 2022) academic literature, which provides findings on how the Belarusian relocation influenced the whole CIS region's IT sphere. It is also worth mentioning scholars from Belarusian state institutions who support the current political authorities of Belarus and write that the mass relocation of some IT companies and specialists abroad that happened in Belarus after 2022 was 'forced' and that it was the main factor that harmed IT sector's economic indicators of foreign trade (Rusakov, 2023). Martin Geiger and Vera Syrakvash, in their survey about the relocation of Russians and Belarusians to Georgia, confirmed that the workers from Belarus and Russia felt pressured by their companies to relocate, and it was not their personal choice (Geiger & Syrakvash, 2023). Also, these migration patterns were investigated by the hosting countries. Lithuanian scientist from Eastern Europe Studies Centre, an independent, non-profit think-tank operating in Vilnius, Živilė Dambrauskaitė (2022) in his study on migration of Belarusians defined two biggest waves of escape from Belarus: fall 2020 – first half-year 2021 because of the political crisis in Belarus, and the period from February 24, 2022, the beginning of the war in Ukraine, onwards (Chmiel et al., 2021; Giczan and Wilson, 2023; Girardot, 2023; Mazurkiewicz and Sygnowski, 2023).

According to the Polish journalist and sociologist Sławomir Sierakowski (Sierakowski, 2020), Belarusian migration was predominantly driven by political motivations. These emigrants expressed dissatisfaction with Lukashenko's governance, citing it as a barrier to their life in Belarus. Researchers of Polish Centrum Mieroszewskiego (a Polish state institution dedicated to supporting the independence and democratic development of Eastern European nations, particularly in response to Russian aggression) Mazurkiewicz and Sygnowski (2023) recently published a report on the results of a public opinion study "Belarusian emigration in Poland." The study offered a multi-dimensional perspective on migration phenomena by analyzing the political, social, and economic motivations behind the migration and the subsequent integration challenges in Poland. Confirming Sierakowski's argument, Figure 5 demonstrates that most Belarusians came to Poland due to the risk of repression in Belarus.

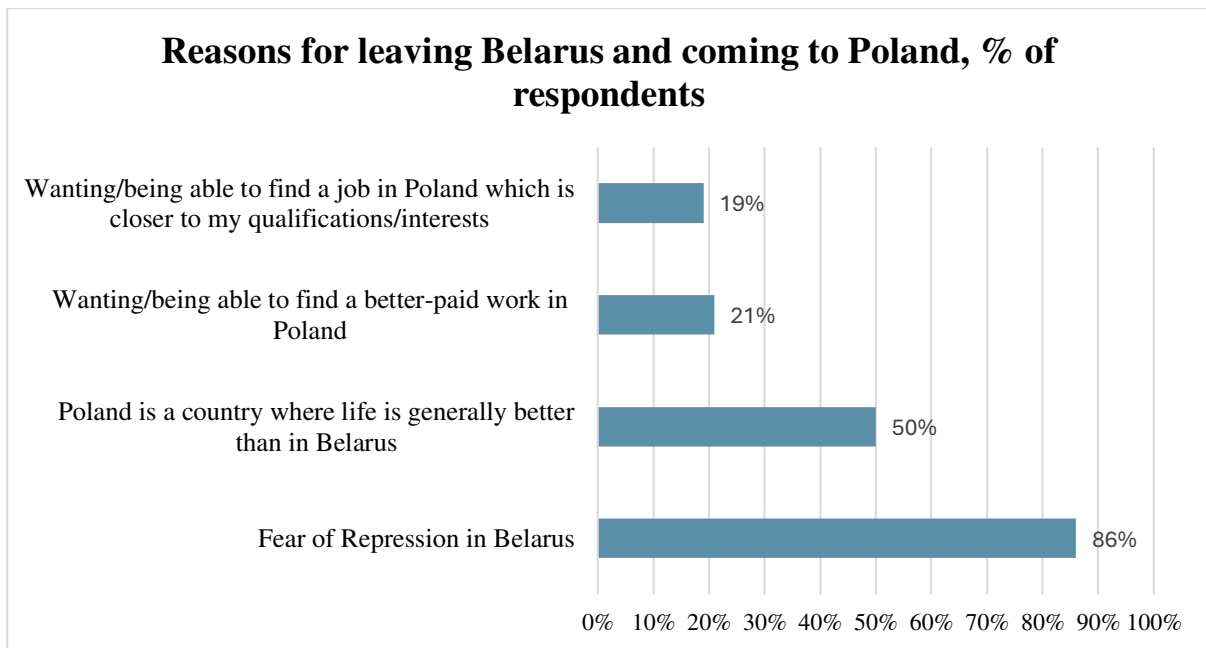


Figure 5 : Research from the report of Centrum Mieroszewskiego based on the results of the public opinion study 'Belarusian emigration in Poland. Source: Mazurkiewicz and Sygnowski, 2023

In addition, Anton Bendarzsevskij (Bendarzsevskij, 2021) provided a nuanced examination of the migration patterns from Belarus to neighboring EU countries, focusing on work-related and political emigration. It discussed how implementing the Karta Polaka (Pole's Card) in 2009 and the post-2020 election events have influenced these trends, notably shifting the migration composition from individuals to enterprises. Specifically, Karta Polaka made moving to Poland much easier for Belarusians possessing it and their families.

Thus, most research on Belarusian migration after 2020 is rooted in sociology and political science, with visibly less focus paid to business aspects. These events' recency and political sensitivity slowed the comprehensive academic exploration of this topic, as individuals and organizations are not open enough to participate in such studies. Moreover, any researchers who write about Belarus are strictly observed by law enforcement agencies, and the absence of freedom of speech in Belarus puts scientists and their potential case study participants in a highly unsafe position where they risk their freedom in the name of science. This context underscores the need to understand organizational behavior and employee support mechanisms in high-risk environments, in this case by studying the unique challenges Belarusian IT professionals faced.

2.3. Perceived Organizational Support Theory

Perceived organizational support (POS) is employees' belief that their organization is concerned about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The concept of POS emerged about thirty years ago. It was founded by Robert Eisenberger, a researcher of psychological and personality determinants of creativity and task enjoyment in children, college students, and employees. According to him, the organization has (a) responsibility for its agents' actions, (b) continuity created by its organizational culture and norms, and (c) power over individual employees exerted through its agents (Eisenberger, et.al., 2020b). In this case, "agents" typically refers to individuals representing the organization in its employee interactions. These agents can include supervisors, managers, or other authority figures within the organization who have the responsibility and authority to act on behalf of the organization. These individuals embody the organization's policies, culture, and norms, and employees perceive their actions as reflecting the organization's support and intentions (Eisenberger, et.al., 1986). It is crucial to define the term "agents" for this thesis, as here agents are the HR/Relocation managers who act on behalf of the companies at the stressful moment of relocation, transmitting their messages and organizing the whole process.

POS stems from two main theoretical frameworks: Organizational Support theory and Social Exchange theory. Therefore, on the one hand, organizational support theorists suggest that employees are inclined to attribute humanlike qualities to their organization, fostering the development of POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986). For example, Levinson (1965) observed that employees often interpret the actions of the organization's representatives as reflections of the organization's intentions rather than the personal motives of the representatives. Organizational support theory also studies the psychological mechanisms that drive the outcomes of POS. First, care, approval, and respect symbolized by POS fulfill socioemotional needs and force employees to integrate their organizational role into their social identity. Second, based on the principle of reciprocity, i.e. the mutual exchange of behaviors, support, and benefits between employees and their organization, POS should create a sense of obligation in employees to care for the organization's well-being and achievement of its goals. Third, POS should reinforce beliefs among the employees that the organization acknowledges and rewards higher performance. These processes lead to positive outcomes for employees, e.g., greater job satisfaction, and the organization, e.g., lower turnover rates (Barksdale and Shore, 1998). On the other hand, theorists of social exchange propose that resources received from others are

appreciated and valued more when the receivers believe they are given voluntarily by the provider rather than because the provider is forced by external circumstances (e.g., Blau, 1964; Cotterell, et al., 1992; Gouldner, 1960). Thus, organizational rewards and favorable job conditions, such as salary, promotions, and rewards, are considered to significantly boost POS if employees perceive these benefits as stemming from the organization’s voluntary actions rather than external pressures (cf. Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997). The POS model, illustrated in Figure 6, conceptualizes how various organizational factors contribute to POS and the subsequent outcomes for both employees and the organization.

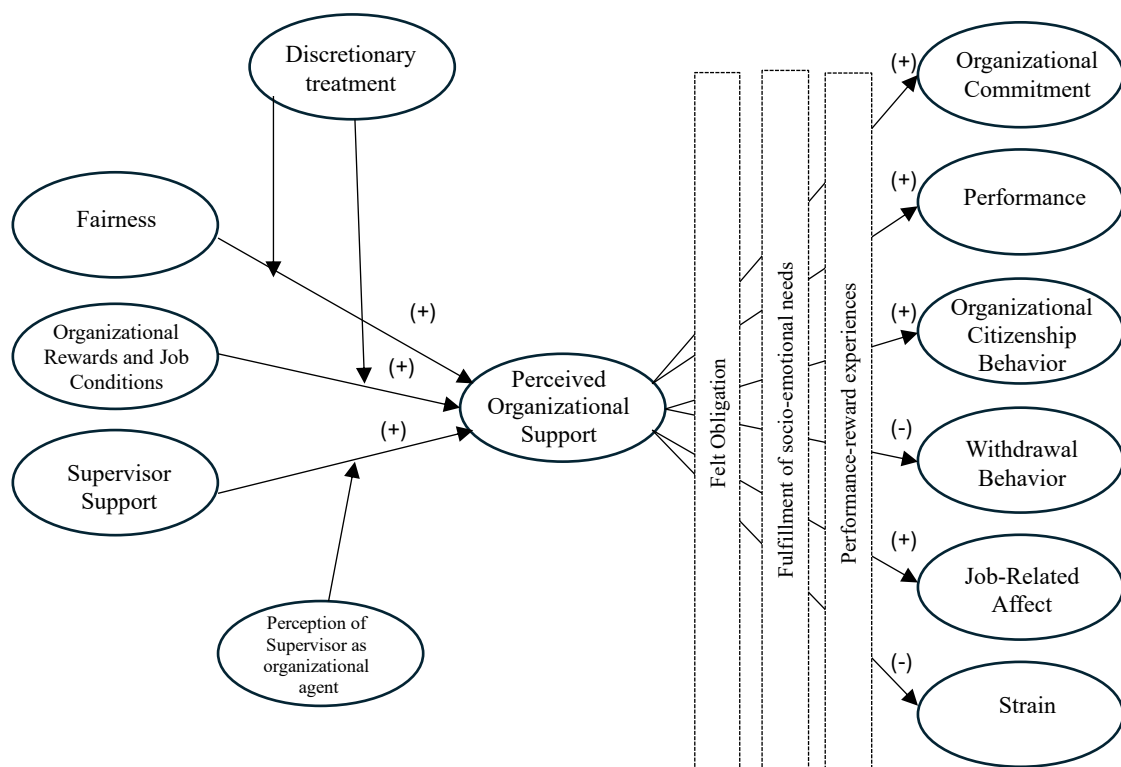


Figure 6: Perceived Organizational Support model. Source: Baran, et. al., 2012

POS is influenced by several vital antecedents: fairness, organizational rewards and job conditions, and supervisor support, with the worker’s perception of a supervisor as an organizational agent playing a pivotal role. Fairness is a crucial aspect of social exchange theory and, therefore, POS. Research has found the link between perceptions of organizational justice — that can be distributive, interactional, and procedural—and employees’ work attitudes (Colquitt et al., 2001). Fair treatment enhances social exchange relationships and increases trust (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958), while trust and organizational justice are interconnected (Aryee et al., 2002). When employees feel they are treated fairly in reward allocation (distributive

justice), have a voice in evaluations (procedural justice), and receive fair treatment from management (interactional justice), trust in their company develops and leads to positive dynamics in employee-employer relationship (DeConinck, 2010). Supervisor support reflects the degree to which supervisors are perceived as caring and supportive, which is further enhanced when employees view their supervisor as a representative of the organization. These factors contribute to POS by providing discretionary treatment – organizational behaviors beyond formal obligations – thus fulfilling employees' socio-emotional needs and performance-reward expectations. As POS increases, employees feel obligated to reciprocate with behaviors that benefit the organization. This leads to several positive outcomes, including enhanced organizational commitment, improved performance, and increased organizational citizenship behaviors—actions that go beyond the employee's formal role and contribute to the organizational environment. Additionally, high POS is associated with reduced withdrawal behaviors (e.g., absenteeism and turnover), positive job-related affect (emotional reactions related to job satisfaction), and lower levels of job-related strain, such as burnout or stress (Baran, et.al., 2012). However, only a few studies have been dedicated to POS in critical or vulnerable environments. For instance, a prominent researcher in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management, Wayne A. Hochwarter (2003), wrote the article "Perceived Organizational Support as a Mediator of the Relationship between Politics Perceptions and Work Outcomes", which examined how POS influences employee reactions in politically charged and stressful work environments. In addition, Shaffer et al. (2001) authored a study, "Work and Family Stressors and Support: Direct and Moderating Effects of Work-Family Conflict on Pre-departure Adjustment of International Assignments", which examined the role of POS in supporting employees who are relocating internationally, highlighting that strong organizational support can mitigate the stress associated with relocation and improve adjustment outcomes.

2.4 Literature review summary

The literature review showed that relocation and POS are closely connected, especially when forced migration due to political instability occurs. The review emphasized that relocation is a practical challenge and a significant event that profoundly affects employees' well-being. By combining ideas from sociology, economics, and psychology, the review highlighted reasons behind relocation and how crucial organizational support was in easing the difficulties of such moves. This combination of theories helps us understand the problems Belarusian IT

professionals face and how companies can better support them. Relocation, as a central process in this thesis, requires a comprehensive understanding of its logistical and strategic aspects and its impact on employees. This chapter defined relocation through various scholarly perspectives, tracing its development from the early 1960s to the present. Contemporary researchers on Belarusian relocation and migration concentrate on migration aspects of relocation and study relocation on a societal level, showing its effects on the national economy of Belarus or the economies of the host countries (Danilczuk, 2023). Furthermore, most local researchers look at relocation from political or social sciences perspectives, and only a few consider the business side of the topic (Naurodski, 2022, Shadurski, 2023). However, including relocation within the context of migration and talent mobility theories is vital because it helps us understand the complex factors involved in moving IT professionals, especially those affected by political situations like in Belarus. These theories shed light on why people move, the challenges they face, and how companies can better support them during the process. By looking at relocation this way, the thesis can more thoroughly explore how external pressures, like political instability, affect the move and what support is needed to make the relocation successful and keep employees satisfied in the competitive IT industry.

Because of this, it is important to shift the focus to understanding perceived organizational support theory. By exploring how relocation affects employees' perceptions of their organization's support, this chapter highlighted the critical role of POS in mitigating the challenges associated with relocation. An organization's support can influence employee well-being, job satisfaction, and long-term commitment, particularly during a disruptive and uncertain relocation. This set the foundation for analyzing how organizations can better manage relocation to maintain high employee engagement and retention levels. Perceived organizational support theory was chosen for this thesis for several reasons: first, it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how employees perceive the support they receive from their organization, which is crucial in relocation – a process that inherently involves uncertainty, disruption, and significant personal and professional issues. Second, POS has not been widely studied in vulnerable and disruptive conditions. Third, POS directly addresses the core concerns that arise during relocation, such as job security, well-being, and the adequacy of support provided by the organization. Employees face new challenges during relocation, including adapting to a new cultural and professional environment. The degree to which the organization offers tangible support — like visa assistance, financial aid, housing, and career development opportunities — can significantly influence employees' perceptions of their

organization's commitment to them. Thus, POS offers a lens to evaluate how well organizations manage their relocating employees' complex needs. Another reason POS is a convincing theory for studying relocation is its focus on discretionary support - those actions carried out by the organization that go beyond formal obligations. During relocation, organizations often have the opportunity to offer additional voluntary support, such as personalized relocation packages, cultural integration programs, or unexpected financial bonuses. POS theory suggests that employees highly value these discretionary efforts and can significantly enhance their perceptions of the organization's support. This aspect of POS is particularly relevant in relocation studies, as it helps to identify the specific types of support that most effectively contribute to positive employee outcomes during and after the move. Finally, POS appears effective in examining the long-term impacts of relocation on organizational commitment and employee retention. High POS during relocation can lead to stronger emotional bonds between employees and their organization, reducing the likelihood of turnover and withdrawal behaviors. Since relocation often involves significant personal and professional upheaval, maintaining high levels of POS is crucial for ensuring employees remain engaged and committed to the organization throughout the transition. By applying POS theory, researchers can better understand the long-term effects of relocation on employee attitudes and behaviors, offering valuable insights into how organizations can retain talent during periods of significant change.

Moving forward, the insights from this review will guide the analysis of how companies handle relocation in unstable political environments. The thesis will examine the effectiveness of different support strategies in maintaining robust POS and achieving successful relocations in Belarusian Company 1 and Company 2 cases. This is important for creating practical advice to help organizations manage relocation challenges, improving company performance and employee satisfaction.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the research objective, questions, and conceptual framework guiding this study. It also describes research methods, data analysis and collection and provides ethical considerations that played an essential role in this study.

3.1. Research Objective, Questions and Conceptual Framework

The objective of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of relocation strategies employed by companies in facilitating the relocation of Belarusian IT workers to Poland after 2020 through the lens of perceived organizational support theory.

The thesis aims to answer to the following research questions:

- 1. What organizational support mechanisms can effectively contribute to the satisfaction of IT workers relocated because of the political crisis?**
- 2. What challenges do Belarusian IT workers face during the relocation process to Poland, and how do these challenges impact their perceived organizational support?**

Based on the analysis of the theoretical foundations of relocation and perceived organizational support (POS) theories, the conceptual framework of this thesis takes into account the political crisis as a trigger for relocation, the challenges faced during this process, and the organizational strategies implemented to support the relocated employees. By examining these elements, the framework is used in this thesis to understand how organizational support influences the satisfaction and well-being of relocated workers. Effective strategies can enhance POS by demonstrating the organization's commitment to employee well-being. Perceived Organizational Support is the ultimate outcome influenced by the challenges and strategies employed. In turn, high POS can increase job satisfaction, loyalty, and performance among relocated employees.

The framework (Figure 7) provides a structured approach to understanding the process of relocation, the challenges encountered, the strategies implemented, and the role of perceived organizational support.

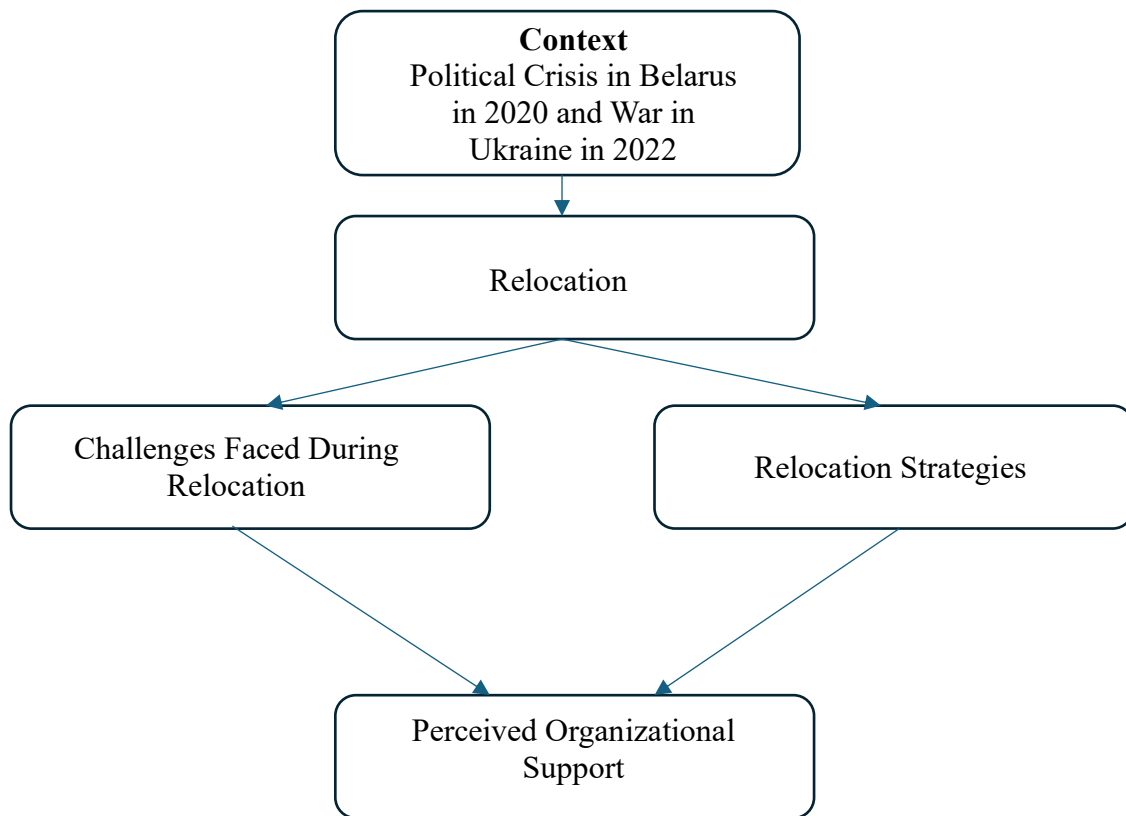


Figure 7: Conceptual Framework Source: Author

The component “Challenges Faced During Relocation” is of particular importance here, as it addresses the second research question, by focusing on Belarusian IT workers' difficulties during the relocation process to Poland and on how these challenges impact their perceived organizational support. The second segment “Relocation Strategies” examines the relocation strategies employed by companies, aiming to answer the first research question by identifying which organizational support mechanisms contribute most effectively to the satisfaction of relocated IT workers. Finally, the framework highlights the role of perceived organizational support in the successful relocation of these workers. This framework serves as the foundation for the research, guiding the investigation into the relocation processes of Belarusian IT workers.

3.2. Methodological approach

This work employs a qualitative research methodology in the form of a case study based on the interviews. This method was chosen for several reasons. First, a case study allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex phenomenon of relocation within specific organizational

contexts. As Yin (2018) noted, case studies are particularly valuable when “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident,” making it a promising approach for studying how relocation, as an organizational process, intersects with employees’ perceptions of support. This method enables the researcher to capture the nuances of real-life organizational practices and their impact on individuals, which is crucial for understanding the application of POS theory in practice. Furthermore, Eisenhardt (1989) emphasizes that case studies are helpful for building and refining theories, particularly in areas where existing theoretical frameworks may not fully explain observed phenomena. This case study approach can provide valuable insights since POS theory has been less explored in the context of disruptive events like relocation. Finally, Baxter and Jack (2015) argue that case studies are adequate for answering “how” and “why” questions, which are central to this thesis. By examining how relocation processes influence employees’ perceptions of organizational support and why these perceptions matter, the case study method provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play, offering practical implications for organizations looking to improve their relocation practices. Qualitative research allows relative flexibility in academic work (Meriam and Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, it allows for tracking unique or unexpected events (such as the revolution attempt in Belarus) and shedding light on how individuals with diverse roles experience and interpret these events. Through interviews, applied here, the study can capture detailed stories that quantitative research might overlook and provide deeper insights into the relocation process and its implications for individuals and companies involved (Meriam and Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, since this thesis’s topic is complex, many new ideas and patterns might emerge during the interview process. However, this research method might be prone to certain research biases, including observer bias, recall bias, and social desirability bias (Creswell and Poth, 2018). This method aligns with the study’s aim of considering the relocation from the employees’ perspectives using POS theory.

3.3. Data Collection

3.3.1. Ethical Considerations

Relocation is a stressful process that might trigger difficulties in employee-employer relationships (Riemer, 2010). The political situation in Belarus and the War in Ukraine made relocation even more complicated and specifically impacted the data collection process for this

thesis. As mentioned before, the IT sector was one of the most politically active communities during the 2020 protests. Following the events of 2020, several Belarusian IT companies, namely PandaDoc and SolbegSoft, were subject to search initiated by the Financial Investigation Department and the Committee for State Security (KGB). The heads of some of these companies were detained and, in particular cases, accused of illegal political activities (RBC, 2020). Many IT workers who participated in protests are still being prosecuted (Dev.by, 2023). Initially, 35 Belarusian companies were contacted for participation in this thesis. However, most refused to participate in the interviews due to security concerns. That is why, participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and the confidentiality measures to protect their identities. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting interviews. Data was anonymized, and any potentially identifying information was removed or altered when presenting findings. Both companies and the people who took part in the interviews were anonymized, and the quotations of media and academic sources in chapters 4.1 and 5.1 were omitted to preserve the confidentiality of the companies. Moreover, after the interviews were conducted, the participants were invited to check their transcripts and, in particular cases, they removed some pieces of text. Specifically, they tended to remove the information that would in any way reveal their personalities (such as names, particular speech styles, and some facts about their families). Another factor they cared about was their political statements. They asked to reconsider or drop some strong and emotional words they used.

3.3.2. Data Collection Process

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of relocation strategies employed by companies in facilitating the relocation of Belarusian IT workers to Poland after 2020. A semi-structured interview approach combined predefined questions and provided flexibility for exploring additional insights as they arose during the interviews. The author conducted eight interviews with the representatives of two Belarusian IT companies. The interviews targeted two main groups: (1) IT professionals from Company 1, a leading multinational provider of software engineering and IT consulting services, and Company 2, a games producer, both relocated to Poland and (2) key management figures involved in the relocation process within these companies. Four employees from each company were interviewed, among which in each company three IT specialists relocated and one HR/Relocation manager organized and took an active part in the relocation process. Representatives of both groups were asked the same questions, with minor alterations based on the personal circumstances of each interviewee, e.g.,

if the HR was not relocated, some of the questions were skipped. This method let the author better understand how the company communicated with the employees and the perspectives of each employee on how the relocation was organized. The interviews were conducted remotely via the video conferencing platform Google Meet. Table 5 provides a concise description of the interviewees from both companies.

Company 1

Name	Position	Gender	Year of relocation to Poland
Interviewee 1	Program Manager	F	2022
Interviewee 2	Junior Front-end developer	M	2021
Interviewee 3	HR Manager	F	2021
Interviewee 4	Data Analysis Head	M	2020

Company 2

Name	Position	Gender	Year of relocation to Poland
Interviewee 1	Middle soft engineer	F	2020
Interviewee 2	Relocation Manager	M	2021
Interviewee 3	Senior Developer	M	2022
Interviewee 4	Program Manager	F	2021

Table 5: Interviewed individuals of Company 1 and Company 2. Source: Author

To conduct the interviews, the author connected with the potential companies through the personal contacts or LinkedIn via a message or email. Before the interview, consent was asked for recording the interviews for the further transcribing. Additionally, the interviews were conducted in the English language so as not to complicate the analysis by translating the nuances of the native language, even though all parties speak Belarusian and Russian on a native level. After the interview, a summary was sent to confirm the conclusions drawn from the transcript.

The survey was composed by the author of the thesis with the help of the similar surveys of Belarusian main IT-related media Dev.by (2024b). The questions were designed to address two main research objectives: identifying effective organizational support mechanisms and

understanding the challenges faced during relocation. Table 6 demonstrates the semi-structured interview questions.

Topic	Question	Reason
1. Personal and Professional Background	1.1. Can you start by telling me a bit about yourself and your role within the company?	Background Information
	1.2. How long have you been working in the IT industry, and when did you join your current company?	Background Information
2. Decision to Relocate	2.1. Can you describe the circumstances that led to your decision to relocate to Poland?	Highlighting stressful conditions of relocation
	2.2. Were there specific events in Belarus, particularly post-2020, that influenced your decision?	Highlighting stressful conditions of relocation
	2.3. How did your company, specifically, play a role in your decision to relocate?	Relocation Strategy of the Company
3. Relocation Process and Company Support	3.1. Can you walk me through the relocation process? How did your company assist you during this transition?	Relocation Strategy of the Company
	3.2. What kind of challenges did you face during the relocation, and how were they addressed?	Relocation Strategy of the Company
	3.3. Were there any visa or legalization issues, and how were these resolved?	Relocation Strategy of the Company
	3.4. Can you describe any relocation package or support provided by the company?	Relocation Strategy of the Company
4. Professional Transition and Integration	4.1. How has the relocation impacted your professional life and career trajectory?	POS theory in action
	4.2. Can you share your experiences in integrating into the IT community in Poland?	POS theory in action
	4.3. Were there cultural or linguistic challenges, and how did you overcome them?	Background Information
5. Perspectives on Belarus and Engagement	5.1. Despite being in Poland, do you still maintain a connection with Belarus? In what ways?	Highlighting stressful conditions of relocation

	5.2. Are you involved in any activities or initiatives related to Belarus, especially considering the political situation?	Highlighting stressful conditions of relocation
6. Reflections and Future Prospects	6.1. Looking back, how do you evaluate your decision to relocate?	POS theory in action
	6.2. Do you have any thoughts on how the situation in Belarus has influenced the IT industry's migration patterns?	Background Information
	6.3. What do you think the future holds for Belarusian IT workers considering relocating?	Recommendations for companies on organizing relocation
7. Recommendations and Advice	7.1. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other Belarusian IT workers considering relocation?	Recommendations for companies on organizing relocation
	7.2. Are there any policies or support mechanisms that you think would be beneficial for individuals in your situation?	Recommendations for companies on organizing relocation

Table 6: Semi-structured Interview Questions. Source: Author

In addition to the literature review, internet sources such as companies' websites and annual reports and media were a source of background information on the companies and assess their suitability for the research. The company websites served as valuable resources to obtain further insights into the business, including the company's history and relevant information about their operations.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews was transcribed and then subjected to a thorough thematic analysis. This process began with repeated readings of the transcriptions to become deeply familiar with the content. Following this, initial codes were generated to capture significant elements within the data. These codes were then organized into potential themes, which were subsequently reviewed, refined, and clearly defined. The final step in this process was the production of a detailed report, following the guidelines outlined by Kiger and Varpio (2020). A cross-case analysis was conducted after completing the thematic analysis for each company. This comparative analysis involved examining the findings from both Company 1 and Company 2 to identify similarities and differences in their relocation processes. The

comparison framework included vital categories such as the organizational strategies employed and the challenges encountered during relocation. Through this approach, common factors influencing perceived organizational support were identified, as well as unique aspects specific to each company. The results were then integrated with existing theories on POS and relocation, providing a richer understanding of the findings. A crucial part of the analysis was member checking. This involved sharing summary findings with participants to confirm the interpreted data's accuracy and relevance, as McKim (2023) recommended. Early sharing of transcripts with participants ensured that the data used in the analysis was accurate and helped address any ethical concerns related to the participants' sense of security, especially given their ongoing connections to Belarus. This step was essential in preventing misinterpretation or errors during data analysis.

In summary, this chapter detailed the methodological approach used to explore the effectiveness of relocation strategies for Belarusian IT workers relocating to Poland in the wake of the 2020 political crisis. Guided by perceived organizational support theory, the study aimed to identify effective organizational support mechanisms and understand the challenges faced during relocation. Semi-structured interviews provided valuable insights from employees and management within the two anonymized IT companies. The data was rigorously collected, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis, with ethical considerations playing a crucial role in ensuring participant confidentiality. The methodology outlined here seeks to uncover best practices for supporting relocated employees, contributing to the broader understanding of organizational support in high-risk environments.

Chapter 4. Empirical Findings on the Relocation of Company 1

This chapter presents the empirical findings on the relocation process of Company 1. Founded in the early 1990s, Company 1 has a global presence and a diverse portfolio, serving various industries such as finance, healthcare, retail, and media. The company significantly reduced its regional presence due to political and social unrest in Belarus and international sanctions. It relocated many of its employees to Poland and other locations. Based on interviews with key workers, the chapter explores the diverse experiences, challenges, and organizational support mechanisms involved in the relocation. It provides insights into how Company 1 managed visa and legal processes, offered financial and housing support, and facilitated emotional and professional integration.

4.1. Company and Interviewees Profile

4.1.1. Company 1

Company 1 is a multinational provider of software engineering and IT consulting services. Founded in the early 1990s, it has grown to become one of the leading players in the information technology sector. The company specializes in digital platform engineering and development services, including custom software development, product design, quality assurance, and consulting services. It serves various industries, such as finance, healthcare, retail, and media, offering complex enterprise software development, cloud computing, and AI solutions. With its headquarters in North America, the organization boasts a global footprint with numerous development centers across Europe, Asia, and Latin America. This allows for a diverse talent pool and the ability to offer round-the-clock development cycles to its clients. It is publicly traded and recognized for its rapid growth and innovation within the technology industry. The company prides itself on its strong corporate culture focused on continuous learning, professional development, and fostering innovation among its employees.

The company had announced plans to significantly reduce its presence in Belarus because of the political and social unrest in the country, along with international sanctions affecting the region. This decision came after the company faced criticism for its continued operation in Belarus amidst the political crackdowns that followed the disputed presidential election in 2020. However, after the beginning of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the company relocated most workers to Georgia and then to Poland. As of 2023, Company 1 froze the opportunity to relocate its employees since, by that time, most of the staff had already been relocated and it decided to

cut costs. Expenses on the relocation fell 40 times compared to 2022. This is stated in the company's financial statements for the third quarter (the citation for this fact is missing due to security concerns). According to the CEO, by the end of 2022, the company planned to reduce the share of its manufacturing workforce in the CIS region to approximately 30%. Poland was considered the primary location for relocating the IT workers. However, there are various locations, starting from Central Asia and finishing with the USA.

4.1.2. Interviewees

Here is a brief background on each interviewee from Company 1 and some of their relocation experiences:

HR Manager from Company 1

The HR manager has been working in the IT industry for four years and is responsible for hiring, conducting interviews, and managing the corporate culture at Company 1. During relocation she had a duty of only providing documentary support, her other work flows suffered because of that. Although she did not relocate and is still based in Belarus, she played a significant role in assisting employees with their relocation to Poland. She worked with around 50 relocatees, and her team relocated around 200 people from the Belarusian office.

The Head of Data Analysis from Company 1

The Head of the Data Analysis department of Company 1 has been in the IT industry for about 15 years and joined the company four years ago. He holds a degree from the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics. He has progressed from junior to senior developer in several large Belarusian IT companies. His decision to relocate was primarily driven by the political unrest in Belarus post-2020, as he took part in political activities and, after that, was afraid to stay in the country because some of his friends were under big KGB pressure.

Program Manager from Company 1

The program manager has been in the IT industry for four years and relocated to Poland after maternity leave. Her husband also works in IT, and their relocation was influenced by the declining IT market in Belarus and the support offered by her company for the move. She has a less than one year old daughter.

Junior Software Developer from Company 1

The junior developer has been in the IT industry for three years and relocated, fearing political persecution in Belarus. He was one of the back-end developers for the Platform “Golos”, which was mentioned earlier as the tool that helped Belarusian opposition prove that Alexander Lukashenka stole the election of 2020. For that, the Belarusian KGB started a criminal case, and he had to flee the country as soon as possible. Company 1 provided some financial support and assistance with documentation, but the developer faced significant psychological pressure because of the abovementioned factors and economic challenges during the transition.

4.2. Organizational Support Mechanisms for Relocation of Company 1 Employees

Effectively managing the relocation of employees, especially in response to political and social unrest, requires thorough preparation. It is crucial to acknowledge that many factors, such as bureaucratic collapse connected with many applications or family-related issues, etc., will evolve between the initial planning stages and when employees are fully settled in their new locations (Dev.by, 2022a). The experiences shared by employees of Company 1 highlight various support mechanisms that were implemented to ensure a smoother transition. One involved navigating their employees through the complex visa and legalization processes. The company used Poland Business Harbour program for relocation. This means that Polish visas were issued according to the general scheme for national visa application. However, in this case, a preferential regime was promised. Thus, no more documents were required besides a passport, photo, questionnaire, insurance, and confirmation of participation in the program (or family ties with the participant). When it comes to the relocation process, the company first had to understand each case of the employees and if the support was needed for an individual or their whole family. Second, they would support each worker (and their families if required) during the document preparation process, such as providing invitations for obtaining PBH visas or dependent visas for the family members and providing support in filling in temporary

residence permit applications. The most challenging thing was the coordination of physical application at the embassy.

The HR manager shared:

“Finding a suitable date and time was hard, especially in case the employee missed or confused the application date and time. The embassy gives a separate day for one company’s employees. Once, one of the senior managers lost his passport several days after the visa was issued. We felt so embarrassed with his irresponsibility...”

Also, they helped to file supplementary documents to Polish authorities and, in particular cases, helped with socializing children of the workers, searching for schools, and helping to gather necessary documents. The company collaborated with local intermediary agency Mia Consult Group, which helped them manage visa applications and temporary residence permits, thereby significantly easing the burden on employees.

The HR Manager noted:

"Our company worked with a local intermediary that fully handled visas and temporary residence permits, significantly easing the process. Since they [Company 1] needed more experience and human resources to provide legal support to our employees, they had to add the agency to our cost structure. Our CEO decided to do it."

The Head of the Data Analysis department of Company 1 detailed,

"The company helped with visa applications, finding schools for my children, and even providing language classes. We had regular check-ins to ensure everything was on track. I had a personal HR manager who dealt with everything."

Senior Data Analyst said:

"Honestly, I dreaded the visa process, but the company made it so much easier. They handled all the nitty-gritty details, and I just had to show up with my passport. It took a huge weight off my shoulders."

This partnership ensured that employees could obtain the necessary documentation without undue stress and that the company would concentrate on strategic management rather than operational aspects of handling relocation. Financial assistance was another critical component of support mechanisms. Relocation packages provided by Company 1 varied. The payment for middle employees was 2000 USD. This payment was considered a moving expense and was paid separately from the temporary housing. Seniority payment is a standard practice in the IT industry (Eby, 2000). To put this into perspective, the biological household minimum for a working-age single person’s surviving in Poland, estimated by the Polish Institute of Labour

and Social Affairs, subordinate to the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy in 2022, was PLN 775.42 (around 173 EUR). At the same time, for a household of two parents and two children, it was PLN 2,713.38 (around 613 EUR) (Kurowski, 2023). Junior workers got around 800-1000 EUR. This means that the payment could allow a person to survive in Poland for around two months for middle and senior-level workers. For a family of four or a junior individual, it would be less affordable, depending on the individual cost preferences of people.

Senior Data analyst confirmed: *“So generally, IT is like the army – the level of seniority really matters”*. The Head of Data Analysis also stated that he received substantial financial support:

“The relocation package was comprehensive. It included financial assistance for moving expenses, temporary housing for the first three months, and a stipend to cover initial costs.”

The HR manager shared what the relocates with whom they worked said about the financial help:

“Once I heard from our programmers something like, ‘They didn’t just throw us into a new place and say, ‘Good luck!’ The financial help, especially with housing, made the move feel possible and even exciting, rather than just overwhelming.’

A Junior Software developer stated when assessing the financial support from the company: *“I felt like it was nothing. It was so upsetting at some point.”* The Head of Data Analysis department of the company confirmed that such payment distribution was unfair:

“It was a lot more than the standard 2000 dollars that the company gave to some other workers. So I could move to a foreign country and feel comfortable there.”

Thus, the financial assistance provided during relocation was crucial but unevenly distributed, leaving some junior employees feeling unsupported while senior employees received more substantial support. This highlights the disparities in financial aid based on seniority.

Housing was another support mechanism in this relocation. Company 1 provided various support to address this issue, including using real estate agents and financial aid for housing rentals.

The HR Manager explained:

“The hardest part for the company's employees was renting housing remotely. They had to spend money on real estate agents. And it is such a mess because at that time there were a lot of scammers who took large money and did not provide a quality service.”

Additionally, the Program Manager shared her personal experience of dealing with housing issues, which included legal assistance provided by the company to resolve disputes with landlords: *"When we had a big issue with our first landlord who wouldn't return our deposit, they [Company 1] jumped in with legal help right away and even helped us find a new place to live."* This proves the discretionary treatment or additional company ad-hoc support.

HR Manager confirmed:

"Yes, there were a couple of situations where the company took the lead and gave the employees a little bit more than planned, for example, in some cases, we helped senior workers move their elderly parents to Poland. Actually, the IT industry is famous for such additional measures, especially the companies with a strong corporate culture of caring."

This approach ensured that employees could secure housing more effectively and addressed any legal or logistical issues during the process.

Moreover, the company's HR department took active steps to provide emotional support and maintain communication with relocated employees because the team understood how important it might be for the people.

The HR Manager emphasized the emotional mood of the relocation process and the importance of continuous support:

"I personally experienced a big responsibility and huge workload. You realize that any information you provide to people is of highest importance to them, and without you, they will not be able to do all the paperwork as efficiently and quickly."

Furthermore, employees like the Junior Frontend Developer expressed the need for more substantial psychological support, as the stress of relocation compounded their existing anxieties: *"As far as you might understand, I didn't have any money for a psychologist, and the company did not provide us any mental support."*

The Head of Data Analysis said:

"Of course, I understand that all this mental health is a matter of fashion. Being skeptical at the beginning, I realized how badly I needed a specialist to talk to. Just talk, come, and share my pain points. Sadly, we did not push the company more to provide a corporate psychologist."

While the company provided some psychological support, the feedback suggests a need for more structured psychological assistance to help employees cope with the stress of relocation.

Company 1 also facilitated the professional integration of its employees into the Polish IT community. This included providing access to language classes and organizing networking opportunities.

The Head of Data Analysis highlighted the benefits of these initiatives:

"The company provided language classes support, which helped a lot. Professionally, the relocation has been very beneficial. The tech industry in Poland is vibrant and there are plenty of opportunities for growth and development."

Junior Frontend Developer supported this opinion:

"When I came to Poland, I realized how much I lost staying in Belarus. The company had such interesting collaborations (seminars, training) with Western companies that I was impressed cause I never saw the same in Belarus".

However, employees' actual integration into the local Polish community varied. While some found it easier to adapt and network, others, like the Program Manager, felt isolated due to language barriers and cultural differences.

When asked how much visa and legal assistance, financial support, housing and logistical help, and emotional and psychological support the company provided impacted the workers' move, the research participants expressed varying levels of satisfaction with the company's relocation support, highlighting effective visa and financial assistance but mixed feelings about the adequacy of housing help and emotional support.

Senior Data Analyst shared:

"The whole visa process was a headache I didn't want to deal with, but the company stepped up. They made it almost too easy. It was like, 'Wait, that's it? We're done?' It was such a relief."

Head of Data Analysis:

"The financial support was undoubtedly generous. But what mattered to me was that it wasn't just about the money - they ensured we felt secure and could focus on our work without worrying about the basics."

Junior Software Developer:

"I won't lie, the housing part was tough. They helped me find a place, but I still felt out of my depth. I was hoping for more hands-on support, but it worked out okay in the end."

Program Manager:

"They tried to offer some emotional support, which I appreciated, but honestly, I felt like it was a little bit like boast off; they did it for the sake of doing, in the end, even brought some strange psychologist whom I did not want to turn to."

HR Manager expressed the company's view on it:

"It was a balancing act, really. We provided a lot, but there's always that feeling of 'Is it enough?' I think we did well, but there were moments where I wished we could've done more, especially on the emotional side. Moving is hard, and sometimes people need to know someone's there for them."

In sum, Company 1's approach to employee relocation addressed various challenges, from bureaucratic hurdles to emotional distress. Although the company's efforts significantly eased the transition for the employees, this was a base assistance that every company would provide in case the relocation was needed. The varied responses from employees underscore the importance of tailored support that goes beyond the basics, addressing emotional well-being and a sense of belonging. As Company 1 continues to refine its relocation strategies, the insights gained from this experience will be invaluable in creating even more effective support systems, ensuring that all employees feel fully supported throughout the relocation process regardless of their position. This case illustrates that while relocation logistics are crucial, the human element – understanding, empathy, and personal connection – plays an equally vital role in the success of such moves.

4.3. Challenges Faced by the Workers of Company 1 During the Relocation Process

Through interviews with employees of Company 1, various difficulties were identified, ranging from logistical issues, such as finding slots for visas, high demand, and limited availability, to psychological adjustments. The difficulty of securing housing remotely was another significant logistical challenge. Many employees had to rely on real estate agents, often facing high costs and the risk of encountering uncooperative landlords.

The Program Manager shared an instance where they faced legal issues with a landlord:

"Our first landlady turned out to be from the former USSR, so she spoke Russian. We were happy at first that she speaks our language. Yet she still owes us \$2,500 in deposit after six months. We have to resolve the issue in court".

When asked about the recommendations that the employee can give to the company regarding relocations, the junior front-end developer said,

“The company can help find an apartment for at least the first month. It would also be great if these things were discussed openly. The company should be empathetic and inform about different possibilities.”

Finding accommodation was obviously a big challenge for him.

The relocation process was not only logistically but also psychologically demanding. The Junior Frontend Developer recounted the psychological strain of leaving behind friends and familiar environments, compounded by the fear of political persecution: *“Each day was stressful for me because I felt like the KGB could knock on my door at any moment.”* This was echoed by the Head of Data Analysis, who expressed concern for family members left in Belarus amidst political instability:

“My challenges were mainly mental. I was worrying about my parents who stayed in Belarus”.

The Program Manager also connected emotional support with the practical reward:

“They [The company] also put us in touch with other employees who had recently moved to Poland, which was great because we could share tips and experiences. This support network helped us settle in and made me feel like the company genuinely cared about us as employees and people”.

The emotional burden of ensuring personal safety while worrying about the well-being of loved ones in Belarus added a significant layer of stress to the relocation experience.

Financial challenges were also noticed at the Company. The Junior Frontend Developer mentioned incurring debt to cover relocation expenses:

“During that period, I took on a lot of debt. I borrowed money from friends and rented an apartment. I ended up renting simultaneously in Warsaw and Krakow.”

Similarly, the Program Manager pointed out the varying levels of financial assistance based on employee seniority, with more senior employees receiving higher relocation payments. This disparity often led to dissatisfaction among less senior staff who struggled with the financial burdens of relocation. A Junior Front-End Developer stated,

“During that period, I took on a lot of debt. I borrowed money from friends and rented an apartment. It was a tough time.”

This demonstrates that the worker is highly dependent on the company in a risky environment.

4.4. Influence of the challenges on Perceived Organizational Support (POS) of the Company 1 employees

The relocation process stressed employees, especially those in HR roles who had to manage multiple relocations under stressful conditions. HR manager complained:

“For the first month, I worked from 7 am to 10 pm without days off simply because I couldn’t do otherwise. This was no longer an ordinary relocation: decisions had to be made at lightning speed and help dozens of people simultaneously... It was tough emotionally”.

She also added that her colleagues experienced the same:

“Through us, communication was carried out. In our company, the HR manager turnover rate was about 15% after the events of 2022. This is a very high figure; such a thing should not be allowed. I love my company because I can grow in it. Still, this situation upset me a lot, and it upset some of my professional colleagues so much that they made the difficult decision to leave the company”.

This overwhelming workload without adequate compensation led to feelings of being undervalued and increased the turnover rate, negatively affecting POS.

Communication between the employer and employee remains the most challenging issue. The HR manager at Company 1 and her team played a pivotal role during the relocation process. As an organizational agent, she demonstrated her dedication and sense of responsibility:

“Our CEO knew that the relocation was needed long before he announced it, but he was also inaccurate in telling people about relocation too late, which made people even more in a fuss.”

The workers of the company demonstrated the following reaction to their HR teamwork.

The Junior Software developer of Company 1 said about the relocation process handled by the company:

“I don’t know if our HR managers were obliged to do so, but when I moved to Poland, my assigned HR always asked how I was doing or if I had any problems. She was always in touch, and I felt I could turn to her with any issues. I felt a humane attitude and a strong sense of belonging and care. That was very nice of her.”

The Program manager from company 1 confirmed the HR’s engagement by saying: *“We had weekly meetings with HR and a relocation specialist, and there was an email set up specifically for any questions we had.”*

While the company's efforts made the transition smoother for many employees, more personalized support could have made a difference, particularly in addressing emotional well-being and clear communication. Perceived organizational support assures employees that the organization will give them the help they need and won't leave them alone in tough times. It means the organization is there for them, supporting them through every challenge (Li, et.al., 2022). In the case of Company 1, it was preserved when the company helped with children's education or additional visa slots for the individuals who confused the dates in the Embassy. This demonstrated the company's preparedness to move beyond the formal, pragmatic employer/employee relationship. However, the seniority principle for the provision of relocation payment preserved in the company broke the fairness principle of POS since some workers consider this unfair, and the difference in the payment between seniors and juniors was substantial. The empirical results confirm that the turnover rate can depend on the treatment of its workers during difficult times. Company 1 moves forward, and the insights gained from this relocation experience will be crucial in refining its strategies, ensuring that all employees feel supported and valued, not just during the relocation process but throughout their entire journey with the company. This case underscores the importance of balancing logistical efficiency with a deep understanding of the human side of relocation, which is essential for fostering long-term employee satisfaction and loyalty.

Chapter 5. Empirical findings on the Relocation of Company 2

This chapter delves into the empirical findings from Company 2's relocation process, exploring the company's profile and the experiences of its employees. Founded in 2010, Company 2 is a significant player in the entertainment and social applications industry, with a global presence and a workforce of 3500 employees. Through detailed interviews with various employees, including a relocation manager, program manager, middle software engineer, and senior developer, the chapter uncovers the diverse challenges and organizational support mechanisms involved in the relocation. It examines the effectiveness of the company's support strategies, the personal and professional difficulties faced by the employees, and how these experiences influenced their perception of organizational support (POS).

5.1. Company and Interviewees Profile

5.1.1. Company 2

Company 2 creates entertainment, social applications, and shareware games. Social applications are software programs or platforms that enhance social interactions and daily activities through IoT technologies, such as smart homes, surveillance systems, and intelligent mobility solutions (Vora, 2009). Regarding shareware games, in this gaming model the game developer or publisher allows users to download and play a portion of the game for free, with the option to pay for the full version or additional features. The company plans to further develop its software platform (framework) including entertainment applications (social applications, shareware games). At present, the company has more than ten divisions in different countries. As indicated on the company's website, the total number of employees is 3,500. In 2021, the company entered an IPO in the US and began trading on NASDAQ. In November 2021, investors began investigating the company after the stock unexpectedly crashed. At the end of 2022, the company entered the top 10 highest-earning mobile publishers. In 2021-2022, the company moved many of its employees from Minsk to Warsaw; about 300 relocated employees, half of the company's staff in Belarus until 2021. The Warsaw office is often called "a backup from Minsk," and it was noted that after the start of the war, the company also moved many Ukrainian IT specialists to Warsaw. In the summer of 2020, before the Belorussian presidential elections and the revolution attempt, Belarussian media started to publish news about Company 2 contemplating leaving Belarus and relocating all its workers due to the then-upcoming August elections outcomes and Internet breaches. At that moment,

the company denied these rumors. However, soon after the election, this Company fully closed its office in Minsk.

5.1.2. Interviewees

Below is a brief background on each interviewee from Company 2 and some of their experiences:

Relocation Manager from Company 2

The Relocation Manager from Company 2 has been an HR specialist for five years, heavily involved in managing the company's relocation process during peak times. Unlike the HR of Company 1, he relocated and, while handling his relocation, helped another hundred workers relocate abroad. The employee desired to move to another country long before 2020, but the events of that year and later the war in Ukraine accelerated his decision.

Program Manager from Company 2

With a background in mathematics and over ten years in the IT industry, the program manager at Company 2 relocated to Poland because of the unstable political climate in Belarus. During the relocation, she worked on a Western-European project. When she wanted to relocate in 2020, this became an issue for the management because it was more expensive, and they would have had to raise her salary significantly. She had to resign from the external Western project and switch to an internal one. That is why this process dragged on, and she managed to relocate only after the War in Ukraine started.

Middle Software Engineer from Company 2

The middle software engineer has been with Company 2 for ten years. Her family of four accompanied her throughout her journey. The decision to relocate was influenced by the political situation in Belarus and the need to support her younger child's education.

Senior Developer from Company 2

The senior developer relocated to Poland primarily to improve his family's prospects after the War in Ukraine started. At the time of relocation, he worked at Company 2 for about eight years. He has a small child, so the decision to relocate was tough. He and his wife thought and decided for a long time, but it was always interesting to try. After two years in Poland, he left the company and now no longer works for it.

5.2. Organizational Support Mechanisms for Relocation of Company 2 Employees

As in the case of Company 1, visas and legal documentation were the core of the assistance for the employees of Company 2 as well. The company set up a dedicated team to handle all aspects of the visa application process. Employees reported that the company managed all the paperwork, ensuring their visas and work permits were processed efficiently. The HR department was reorganized with the workers who previously dealt with internal communication and corporate culture transferring to the so-called “field workers” for some time.

The company's HR describes this in the following way: *“This was tough, but people did not ask questions; they just had to plan their days to encompass not only their previous duties but also relocation”*.

What is more, as mentioned before, the HR of this company handled both his relocation and the relocation of his colleagues:

“The company helped with visas and legalization afterward. This is something that I, as an HR and a relocated employee, am thankful for. It made my life much easier. Of course, relocating yourself at that moment felt hard. Sometimes I worked better for others than myself”.

The senior software engineer noted,

“The company took care of the paperwork and legalization. At the border, I showed my signed contract, which became valid the next day.”

HR also mentioned that relocation was *“one of the hardest periods in my career.”* HR team worked long hours and were *“under permanent stress.”* The duties of the HRs included coordinating visa and work permit processes, assisting with housing arrangements, providing financial support and guidance, facilitating the transfer of employee benefits, ensuring

compliance with legal and company policies, managing communication between the company and employees, providing emotional and psychological support, and handling logistical arrangements for the move. Each HR manager was given five to seven workers for whom they performed all the abovementioned arrangements. This comprehensive support eased the bureaucratic burden on employees and allowed them to focus on other aspects of their relocation., i.e. their families or children. This support included covering moving expenses and providing a stipend for initial costs. The size of the stipend was 1000 USD. Based on the same biological minimum of Poland in 2022 (PLN 775.42 (173 EUR) for individuals, around PLN 2,713.38 (613 EUR) for a household of two parents and two children), this amount would let individual workers survive for one month in Poland, however, those who moved with the families would find it rather tricky.

The relocation manager explained,

"There were two options. Either you get paid \$1000 immediately, or they cover some expenses, such as first month's rent plus tickets, you pay yourself and then submit invoices. Most people chose \$1000 here and now." The program manager of Company 2 confirmed this: "The company covered the relocation expenses and gave around 1000 dollars, arranged for initial housing, and provided health insurance in Poland".

Unlike in Company 1, there were no seniority-dependent payments.

Middle Soft Manager, when asked what was especially challenging over the whole process stated: *"The lack of affordable, or even average, housing on the market."* The company assisted employees in finding suitable housing in Poland and provided temporary accommodation for the initial months.

Senior software developer was critical about the company's housing advice:

"They also assisted with finding housing. There were meetings where they explained various nuances, like tax issues, which no one fully understood. Some so-called consultants had lived in Poland for a while. But after some time here, you realize that most meetings were pointless, except maybe the tax ones."

A program manager described the process,

"The company arranged for initial housing and provided health insurance in Poland. However, finding permanent housing was challenging and required personal effort."

The company also facilitated the relocation of employees' families, handling necessary documents and ensuring that all family members were legally settled. Despite the challenges,

such as the high demand for housing, the company's efforts significantly eased the logistical burdens associated with relocation.

The company provided resources such as workshops on dealing with stress and managing multitasking, which were particularly beneficial for HR managers and other employees involved in the relocation process. An HR manager shared, "*It was a good supplementary thing for us, and my team members liked it.*"

However, not all employees agree with this opinion. Middle Soft engineer stated:

"We formed a support group, an internal Telegram chat for various questions. However, for a group of 500 people, we relied on personal contacts for support. Having a dedicated psychologist might make it easier".

This demonstrates that the employees had to take care of themselves in critical moments.

The company facilitated professional networking opportunities and encouraged participation in local IT communities and events. Language classes were also provided to help employees overcome linguistic barriers and integrate more seamlessly into the Polish work environment. A program manager noted,

"Learning Polish was essential for overcoming these challenges. I took language courses and practiced speaking with Polish colleagues."

Furthermore, the company supported employees' professional development by involving them in larger, more diverse projects that involved large Western European or American corporations. For example, a Middle soft engineer was involved in developing some game parts for the Ubisoft corporation. She stated that it would never be possible in Belarus. Some other colleagues of her immediately got access to the projects with EA and Microsoft.

For the workers, it was essential due to the following reason provided by the Program manager:

"At that moment [After the events of 2020] large and nice projects were going out of Belarus, and still being in Belarus made me and my team stagnate and do some small and not interesting ones. American companies stopped working with Belarusian subsidiaries and suspended the cooperation. This move to Poland has allowed me to contribute to larger projects and finally get some unique and nice experience."

When asked how smoothly their relocation was, the employees answered in the following ways.
HR Manager:

"Honestly, handling my own relocation while coordinating everyone else's was intense. There were days I didn't know how I'd get through it all, but the company's support with visas and paperwork was a lifesaver. I was grateful for the help, even if it meant working long hours and being under constant stress. But looking back, I can say it made a tough situation manageable."

Senior Software Engineer:

"The paperwork was handled well, and I had no issues with the visa process. But when it came to housing, I felt like we were left to figure out too much on our own. Sure, they offered some advice, but I had to learn a lot the hard way. The meetings about taxes were helpful, but overall, I expected more hands-on support."

Program Manager: *"The company did a solid job with the basics—visa, initial housing, and health insurance were all sorted out, which took a lot of stress off my shoulders."* Middle Soft Manager:

"I appreciated the stipend, but for someone with a family, it wasn't enough to cover all our needs. It was a rocky start, but we made it through with some improvising."

These quotes reflect a range of experiences and feelings about this relocation but demonstrate that the company definitely helped by offering visa and legal assistance, financial support, housing and logistical support, emotional and psychological support, and professional integration. However, there were areas where employees felt more hands-on assistance and emotional support could have made the transition smoother and less stressful.

5.3. Challenges Faced by the Workers of Company 2 during the Relocation Process

During the relocation process at Company 2, employees experienced various challenges related to professional support and communication. One key issue the HR Manager highlighted was the delayed communication from the C-level management.

"The company's [leadership] response was mixed. Some issues got sorted quickly, but others took ages. For example, the promised financial help took months to arrive, which was tough when we first moved,"

she explained. This delay in providing critical financial assistance added stress during an already challenging time.

The Senior Software Engineer pointed out the need for more proactive support from the company. *"One interesting thing about our company is that they were not proactive; however, if you ask for something, they will do their best to help,"* he noted. This reactive approach meant

that employees had to initiate requests for support, which could be frustrating and time-consuming.

Despite these challenges, the HR Manager found solace and support in her colleagues.

"I felt supported mostly by my other colleagues. We created a chat together, and there we could discuss everything. We helped each other with information, documents, etc. Thanks to my colleagues, who eventually became my friends, we managed to survive those hard times,"

she shared. This peer support network was crucial in navigating relocation difficulties and provided a sense of community and mutual assistance. The psychological strain of leaving behind friends and familiar environments was significant.

The Middle Soft Engineer expressed the emotional side of the move:

"My challenges were mainly mental. I was simply worrying about my parents who stayed in Belarus. Although the company made sure that I would be ok, I was sad about what I left behind in Belarus".

The senior developer stated,

"It's like psychology, you know? I went through depression, denial, anger, and acceptance. ...Many of my friends say the first six months are the hardest. I hated everything, I was angry, and I was close to depression..."

Similarly, the HR Manager highlighted the impact of a high workload and the stress of managing relocations:

"At that time, there was a very high workload; many of my colleagues were quitting one after another. This increased pressure on those who stayed, which was mentally exhausting".

During the relocation process at Company 2, employees faced significant challenges due to high workloads and frequent staff turnover. The HR Manager highlighted their pressure, stating,

"At that time, there was a very high workload. Many of my colleagues were quitting one after another. It turned out that one person was assigned to a specific specialist, then he or she would quit, and the person wasn't reassigned to anyone."

These constant departures and reassignments created substantial gaps in the relocation process.

"There were delays and gaps, especially when the relocation specialists kept quitting. This left us confused, and we often had to handle things ourselves,"

she added. The Program Manager shared a similar experience when her relocation manager took an extended sick leave because of severe health problems.

"When my relocation manager got a serious injury and took a long sick leave, the company was not fast in providing me with a new manager to continue and finish this process. When the manager was finally appointed, she did not know my case,"

she explained. The lack of continuity and delayed reassignment of responsibilities further complicated the already challenging relocation process.

These issues underscore the strain placed on employees due to high workloads and insufficient support from the company, highlighting the need for better management and resource allocation during critical times, such as decreasing the distance between top management and employees and appointing backup managers for cases when the primary manager becomes unavailable, the backup can immediately take over without any delays or disruptions, ensuring continuity in the relocation process.

5.4. Influence of the Challenges on Perceived Organizational Support (POS) of the Company 2 employees

This subchapter explores how the challenges impacted employees' sense of support from the organization. One of the significant challenges highlighted by the employees was the inconsistency and delays in the relocation process due to the frequent changes in relocation staff and the lack of a streamlined process. A Middle Soft Engineer described their frustration with the process:

"The relocation specialists kept quitting, which sometimes left us in limbo. We often had to figure things out independently, like booking embassy appointments. It felt like we were sometimes left hanging, which added to the stress of an already challenging situation."

The HR Manager confirmed:

"In such a stressful period, my feelings are like I am the center of the universe in the bad sense because you have billions of tasks, and it seems that everybody on earth needs only you to survive. Of course, in such an atmosphere, staying calm and not stressed is almost impossible."

These delays and lack of employee stress indicate that the company should care about ordinary employees and relocation-related specialists.

There were notable examples where the company demonstrated high support levels, significantly enhancing employees' POS. For example, a Program Manager shared a positive experience when they faced unexpected expenses during relocation:

"I lost my bag with all the technical equipment at the Belarus-Poland border. This equipment belonged to a company, and to be honest, I think it was stolen. The company decided not to ask me to cover those costs even though I had to do it legally, which was a great relief."

This decision by the company to cover the cost, despite the legal obligation for the employee to pay, was seen as a significant supportive gesture, alleviating financial stress and reinforcing a sense of organizational care.

Providing career development opportunities played a crucial role in enhancing employees' POS. A Program Manager expressed satisfaction with the opportunities for professional growth provided by the company:

"Looking back, the decision to relocate was one of the best choices I made for my career and personal growth. I'm always going on business trips because I'm willing to do it, and the company is willing to send me somewhere, so I like being here."

Employees highly valued access to workshops, conferences, and business trips, which contributed positively to their perception of the company's support. Some employees maintained a pragmatic perspective on the nature of employer-employee relationships, acknowledging both the support and the limitations and stating that employees should have small expectations from the companies. A Senior Developer shared:

"My attitude has not shifted during this relocation experience. Sometimes, I was angry because of some delays, but I am mainly a realistic person. I never expect more than I legally can."

While providing recommendations for the employees during the relocation, this employee also demonstrated his predisposition to pragmatism and rational thinking:

"There's a joke that when a company says you're family, it means they've already cheated you out of money. So, don't build illusions; you'll never be a family. For the company, you're just an employee they can replace. These are temporary, partner relationships. If the company doesn't provide what you need, change the company rather than trying to change it from within."

This pragmatic approach shows that while support is appreciated, expectations must be managed realistically. Peer support emerged as a critical factor in mitigating the challenges of relocation. An HR Manager highlighted the importance of colleague support during the transition:

"We created a chat together, and we could discuss everything there. We helped each other with information, documents, etc. We survived those hard times thanks to my colleagues, who eventually became my friends."

All workers mentioned that it was important to communicate with colleagues who went through the same challenges. Inconsistencies in the company's responses to employee needs were a recurring issue. A Middle Soft Engineer described the company's varying levels of responsiveness:

"The response was inconsistent. Some issues were addressed quickly, while others took forever. For example, the promised financial help took months, which was tough when we first moved and needed that support the most."

These inconsistencies often led to frustration and feeling left unsupported during critical times, negatively impacting employees' POS. While the company made significant efforts to assist employees with visas, legal documentation, housing, and career opportunities, inconsistencies in communication, delays, and high workloads posed challenges that impacted employees' sense of support. These challenges highlighted the importance of continuity, proactive management, and a comprehensive approach to emotional and psychological well-being. Despite the difficulties, instances where the company went above and beyond – such as covering unexpected expenses – were highly valued and reinforced a sense of organizational care. Ultimately, while employees appreciated the support provided, these experiences underscore the need for companies to continually refine their support strategies, balancing practical assistance with empathy and responsiveness to ensure a smoother and more supportive relocation experience.

Chapter 6. Comparative Analysis of Relocation Support Strategies and POS Influences

This chapter provides a detailed examination of the relocation processes and support strategies employed by Company 1 and Company 2, compares their effectiveness, and aligns the findings with relocation-related theories.

6.1. Relocation Process in Company 1 and Company 2

6.1.1. General characteristics of relocation

The results of the interviews show that there were two waves of relocation. The first started in August 2020 after the presidential elections, which resulted in massive protests that were later suppressed. During the first wave, only particular individuals who had problems with the law enforcement agencies in Belarus because of their political activism left the country. The second wave made even less politically active IT workers move because otherwise, they would lose their jobs. In Company 1, most workers moved during the second wave of relocation. Company 2 relocated most workers after the onset of the War in Ukraine. In the case of Company 1, the relocation was partial (there is still the entity that operates in Belarus) and external (employees moved out of the country's borders) (Brouwer et. al., 2004). In the case of Company 2, the relocation was complete – the company closed its office in Belarus – and divided into two stages – first, the employees moved to Georgia, and from there, they moved to Poland. However, not all employees followed the same pattern. Some of them moved directly to Poland. The empirical findings of this research challenge the clear-cut distinction between voluntary and involuntary relocations in the literature. The employees say that choosing not to move would be an irrational decision judging by the industry competitors. The workers' answers from both companies prove that the choice to be relocated was, in most cases, inflicted on the employees. The concept of “involuntary voluntariness,” where employees are nominally given a choice but external circumstances (e.g., political instability, economic downturn) heavily influence that choice and make it almost an obligation, might be an addition to the existing theory on relocation. This could lead to more sophisticated models that better capture the complexity of decision-making in high-pressure environments. The political unrest and threats of criminal charges created an environment where staying in Belarus was no longer viable for many IT professionals, thereby proving political grounds for migration. Thus, the political crisis in

Belarus became the push factor for the employees of both companies. One interviewee, a junior front-end developer, recounted his experience:

"I had political problems. I relocated due to my political activity in 2020. In Belarus, I am threatened with criminal charges. I was detained and severely beaten by the police. At that time, I was lucky not to face criminal charges, but later, the repression increased, and I realized that I had to flee."

Head of Data Analysis of Company 1 also stated:

"I have participated in the political movements even in 2010, when there were also the protests in Belarus, and I donated money to our democratic forces, so as you understand, being in Belarus is a no-go for me."

However, the whole scope of relocation cannot be limited to politics only. For some people, this action was a response to immediate danger and a strategic move they aimed to do long before the events of 2020 and 2022. The following interviewees' quotes prove relocation as a strategic consideration:

"In 2020, the political climate in Belarus was volatile. I don't consider it the main reason. I always wanted to move abroad. During this period, Company 2 offered me this opportunity." Or "I always wanted to leave the country, so the decision was made long before the events. But after 2020, the opportunity arose."

Middle Soft engineer said:

"I'm embarrassed to say this, but as soon as we realized our child would go alone, we decided we had to go with him and be nearby all the time. We made this step to help him. Of course, it was somewhat related to political issues. But the main reason was our son. Plus, our child was politically active in Belarus."

These answers highlight that the relocation was a necessary move rather than a choice because external political pressures necessitate or give an impulse to relocate. Theorists such as Albrecht (1995) suggest that relocatees are often victims of powerful external forces over which they usually have no control. This scenario's push factors are significant, driving individuals to seek safety and stability elsewhere. At the same time, there is no specific answer to the question whether the relocation was voluntary (initiated by the request of an employee) or involuntary (forced by the company) (Forster, 1990). Neither company insisted on relocating the employees, stating that it was clear from the company's messages that their businesses were under threat and nobody was sure they could continue working.

Front-end Developer of Company 1 stated:

“First, they asked us if we wanted to relocate. It was not forced. After that, it became visible that relocation is inevitable.”

At the same time, the Senior developer of Company 2 said:

“The company didn’t force us; they suggested it. But let’s be honest, at that time, it was clear that the prospects in Belarus were bleak. The company wasn’t the only one relocating employees. It was evident from the situation in the industry that it was just a matter of time before most companies would leave.”

The analysis of the two waves of relocation within Company 1 and Company 2 leads me to introduce the concept of "involuntary voluntariness," where employees appear to have a choice but are effectively compelled by circumstances beyond their control, especially if politically driven. This concept emerges as an insight from the study, revealing that the political turmoil in Belarus was a powerful push factor, prompting both strategic relocations initiated by the companies and reactive relocations driven by immediate necessity. This nuanced perspective challenges the conventional intersect of voluntary versus involuntary relocation, underscoring the complexity of decision-making in crisis contexts. It suggests the need for more sophisticated models that better capture the complex realities employees face when navigating high-pressure, politically charged environments. The concept of "involuntary voluntariness" offers a transformative lens for understanding decision-making processes in contexts where individuals' autonomy is constrained by external pressures. Traditional frameworks often view decisions as either voluntary or involuntary, assuming a clear binary between free choice and coercion. However, "involuntary voluntariness" challenges this perspective by introducing the idea that many decisions, particularly in high-pressure environments such as political instability, economic crises, or organizational upheaval, occupy a gray area where the appearance of choice is heavily influenced by external forces. In practical terms, recognizing "involuntary voluntariness" can improve organizational practices, especially in human resources and international business, where understanding the pressures employees face can lead to more empathetic and effective support systems. This concept also has significant implications for public policy, particularly in areas like migration, labor mobility, and social welfare, where policies can be better designed to address the realities of those making decisions under duress. Moreover, it encourages researchers to adopt more sophisticated methodologies that reveal the complexities of decision-making, paving the way for a deeper exploration of how coercion and

pressure influence decisions that are typically categorized as voluntary. Ultimately, "involuntary voluntariness" holds the potential to significantly advance our understanding of autonomy and decision-making in pressured environments.

6.1.2. Visa and Legal Support

Both Company 1 and Company 2 recognized the difficulties involved in securing visas and legal documentation as the most important elements of the relocation process. In reference to talent mobility theories described in Chapter 2, following the Shortage and Visa Policy Theory (Campbell and Tham, 2011; Czaika and Parsons, 2017), both companies facilitated these processes to ensure their employees could relocate smoothly and without undue stress. The HR Manager noted that this collaboration was essential due to the company's lack of internal expertise and resources to provide legal support. This strategy aligns with POS theory, where organizations are seen as fulfilling their responsibility to support employees during crises (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Using the Poland Business Harbor (PBH) visa also ensured a smoother transition and proved to be a good program in critical conditions of this relocation. Company 1 utilized the Poland Business Harbour program, simplifying the visa application process and reducing the bureaucratic burden on employees. It also collaborated with local intermediary agencies to manage visa applications and temporary residence permits, significantly easing the burden on employees. This approach reflects an understanding of the challenges identified in the literature, such as those noted by Eby and Allen (1998), where reducing administrative obstacles is crucial in mitigating stress during relocation. By streamlining the visa process, Company 1 adhered to the principles of the Political Economy Determinants (Beine et al., 2011), ensuring that employees felt supported by the organization in navigating the complex legal landscape of international relocation. Similarly, Company 2 set up a dedicated team to handle all aspects of the visa application process. This way, they minimized the bureaucratic consequences of the relocation. Employees reported that the company managed all paperwork, allowing them to focus on other aspects of relocation. This support reflects organizational commitment to employee well-being. This proactive strategy also aligns with the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), emphasizing the importance of leveraging organizational resources to support employees during significant transitions. By ensuring that legal and visa requirements were met efficiently, both companies reinforced their commitment to supporting their employees through the relocation process, which is critical in maintaining high levels of POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The findings from Company

2 highlight the limitations of a reactive support model, where assistance is provided only upon employee request. This contrasts with proactive support, which anticipates and addresses employee needs before they escalate into issues. Some interviewees stated that companies' leaders usually know much in advance about relocating their businesses. Still, they tell their employees this too late, resulting in uncomfortable time restraints. The Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991) typically focuses on leveraging organizational resources for competitive advantage. Still, this thesis expands the theory by suggesting that the timing and nature of support are critical to its effectiveness. Organizations should aim to be proactive, providing support based on anticipated needs rather than waiting for employees to ask.

6.1.3 Financial Support

The financial support provided by both companies reflects different approaches to managing the economic impact of relocation on employees. Company 1 offered relocation packages based on employee seniority, with more senior employees receiving higher amounts. This approach, while logical from a hierarchical perspective, may have inadvertently affected perceptions of fairness among less senior employees. According to POS Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), fairness and equity are fundamental to maintaining positive employee perceptions of organizational support. The dissatisfaction among junior employees, as evidenced by their feedback, suggests that the tiered financial support system in Company 1 may have negatively impacted their POS, particularly regarding the Rewards Structure Theory (Bidwell and Briscoe, 2010), which highlights the importance of perceived fairness in compensation. In contrast, Company 2 provided a standardized payment of \$1,000 to all relocating employees, regardless of seniority. While this approach was perceived as more equitable, more was needed for employees with families. This highlights the need for a more nuanced approach to financial support that considers individual circumstances, aligning with the Education and Talent Allocation Theory (Carnegie and Tuck, 2010), which emphasizes the importance of tailoring support to meet the specific needs of employees based on their roles and responsibilities. The findings reveal that a tiered financial support system, as implemented by Company 1, can lead to perceptions of unfairness among employees, particularly those in junior positions. While the Rewards Structure Theory (Bidwell and Briscoe, 2010) emphasizes the importance of compensation in talent mobility, this study suggests that the perceived fairness of these packages is equally critical. The dissatisfaction among junior employees indicates that financial support needs to be more personalized, considering individual circumstances rather than relying

solely on seniority. This expansion suggests that organizations should consider a more flexible and needs-based approach to financial support in relocation, which could enhance POS and mitigate feelings of unfairness. The comparative analysis between the standardized financial support of Company 2 and the tiered approach of Company 1 also provides new insights into the Education and Talent Allocation Theory (Carnegie and Tuck, 2010). The findings suggest that while standardization can offer a sense of equality and predictability, it may not always meet the diverse needs of employees, particularly those with families or specific financial constraints. Conversely, a more tailored approach, though potentially seen as more equitable, risks creating perceptions of unfairness if not managed transparently. This expands the theory by emphasizing the need for a hybrid approach that balances standardization with flexibility, ensuring all employees feel adequately supported without compromising fairness.

6.1.4 Housing and Logistical Support

Housing and logistical support were critical components of the relocation process in both companies. Company 1 provided assistance through real estate agents and legal support, helping employees secure housing remotely. However, the feedback from some employees suggests that the support needed to be improved, particularly for those unfamiliar with the local housing market. This aligns with the challenges highlighted in the Linguistic Compatibility and Socio-Cultural Affinity Theory (Chiswick and Miller, 2008), where employees face additional barriers in adapting to new environments. Company 2 also recognized the challenges of securing housing remotely and took steps to provide initial accommodation and guidance on long-term housing solutions. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives varied, with some employees feeling that the support provided needed to be more practical. This reflects the importance of aligning support strategies with the real-world needs of employees, as emphasized in the Knowledge-Based View theory (Grant, 1996). By ensuring that housing and logistical support are practical and relevant, companies can enhance the effectiveness of their relocation programs and improve employee satisfaction. Both companies recognized the challenges of finding housing remotely and provided support to mitigate these issues. Company 1 assisted with housing rentals through real estate agents and offered financial aid. The HR Manager acknowledged the difficulties employees faced in renting housing remotely, indicating that many had to rely on real estate agents, which added to their expenses. Additionally, the company provided legal assistance to resolve disputes with landlords, as was stated by the Program Manager. These efforts align with relocation theory that stresses the importance of

logistical support in easing the transition (Sagie et al., 2001). Similarly, Company 2 arranged for initial housing and provided health insurance, easing the immediate logistical burdens. However, as noted by the senior software developer, employees found it challenging to secure permanent housing. Despite meetings and consultations organized by the company to assist with housing and tax issues, employees found these sessions less effective than expected. This indicates the need for more hands-on and practical support in finding permanent housing solutions (Gheorghe and Panazan, 2021). In summary, while both Company 1 and Company 2 made efforts to provide housing and logistical support during the relocation process, the effectiveness of these initiatives varied. Company 1 offered assistance through real estate agents and legal support, but employee feedback highlighted gaps, particularly for those unfamiliar with the local market. Similarly, Company 2 provided initial accommodation and health insurance but needed help to offer practical, long-term housing solutions. These findings emphasize the need for relocation support strategies to be closely aligned with the real-world needs of employees to ensure successful transitions and higher satisfaction levels.

6.1.4 Emotional and Psychological Support

Relocation's emotional and psychological impact was a significant concern for employees in both companies, and the support provided in this area varied. Company 1's HR department actively communicated with relocated employees, providing moral support. However, employees like the Junior Frontend Developer highlighted a need for more substantial psychological assistance. They thought that it was not sufficient to address the stress and anxiety associated with relocation. The absence of professional psychological support meant that employees had to cope with stress and anxiety largely on their own, which could have been mitigated by more structured support systems (Brett & Feldman, 1985). The emotional strain was particularly evident in the accounts of employees experiencing depression and significant stress due to high workloads and personal challenges. This highlights the importance of providing comprehensive psychological support as part of the relocation process, as highlighted in the Talent Management literature (Ariss, 2014), where employee well-being is recognized as a critical factor in successful talent mobility. Company 2 organized workshops on stress management and multitasking, which benefited some employees. However, the reliance on personal contacts for support indicated a gap in professional psychological services. The formation of internal support groups, such as a Telegram chat, reflects employees' need for community and support, underscoring the importance of psychological assistance during

relocation (Kanfer, 1990). The case study found that while formal psychological support provided by organizations is essential, informal peer support networks play a crucial role in mitigating relocation's emotional and psychological challenges. This finding extends Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), highlighting that informal peer networks can be as important, if not more so, than formal organizational support systems in maintaining employee well-being during relocation. Organizations should recognize and foster these networks, perhaps by creating platforms or opportunities for employees to connect and support each other during such transitions. This could be particularly effective in high-stress environments where formal support might not fully address individual emotional needs.

6.1.6 Professional Integration and Development

Both companies took steps to facilitate the professional integration of their employees into the new work environment, which helps maintain high levels of engagement and job satisfaction post-relocation. Company 1 provided language classes and networking opportunities, assisting employees to integrate into the local IT community. These initiatives are consistent with the Education and Talent Allocation Theory (Carnegie & Tuck, 2010), emphasizing the importance of professional development opportunities in enhancing POS. Company 2 went a step further by involving employees in larger, more diverse projects with major Western corporations. This approach provided significant career development opportunities, which employees highly valued. The Talent Mobility Theory (Nawaz, 2013) supports this approach, highlighting the importance of providing employees with opportunities for career advancement and skills development as part of the relocation process. Company 2's focus on integrating employees into larger, high-profile projects post-relocation provided significant career development opportunities. This approach expands the Talent Mobility Theory (Nawaz, 2013) by demonstrating that career development should be an integral part of the relocation process, not just an outcome. Organizations can significantly enhance POS and employee commitment by offering immediate opportunities for professional growth as part of the relocation package. This suggests that relocation support should address logistical and emotional needs and proactively incorporate career advancement opportunities to ensure a smoother transition and higher employee satisfaction.

6.1.7 Comparative Insights

The comparative analysis of the relocation processes in Company 1 and Company 2 reveals that both companies made significant efforts to support their employees, but the effectiveness of these efforts varied. Company 1's approach, which involved a tiered financial support system and limited psychological support, may have negatively impacted perceptions of fairness and organizational support, particularly among less senior employees. In contrast, Company 2's standardized financial support and focus on professional development provided a more equitable and career-oriented relocation experience, though the support provided for housing and emotional well-being could be improved. Both companies could benefit from aligning their relocation strategies more closely with the theories outlined in the literature, particularly in areas such as fairness, tailored support, and comprehensive psychological care. Doing so can enhance their employees' perceptions of organizational support, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and overall well-being during and after the relocation process. The study also highlights how relocation can occur in multiple stages, such as Company 2's strategy of first moving employees to Georgia and then to Poland. Such relocations happened in the second wave after the beginning of the war in Ukraine. Since companies had to act quickly, they created a safe ground by sending their employees first to a visa-free country for Belarusians (which is Georgia) and only then to Poland. From one point of view, this multi-stage process introduces additional complexity, as employees must adapt to multiple environments, legal systems, and cultural contexts in a relatively short period; however, at the same time, it gives both the company and workers time to make further strategic decisions. Traditional relocation theories often treat relocation as a single event. Still, the findings prove that it is a complex event, and in critical times, such actions as two-step relocation are needed for a smoother transition.

Finally, this research indicates that relocation, especially on a large scale, can catalyze broader organizational change. For instance, in Company 2, workers complained about a lack of proper management, which resulted in delayed document processing and high HR managers' workload. This proves that relocating a significant portion of a workforce may necessitate shifts in corporate culture, changes in management structures, or the adoption of new technologies to facilitate remote work. This aspect of relocation as a driver of organizational transformation could be further developed within Relocation Theory, offering insights into how companies can leverage relocation not just as a response to external pressures but as an opportunity for strategic renewal and innovation. Among the insights from this study, there were ideas about backup managers who would be able to replace their colleagues if needed or cross-training other HR

personnel. This could create a basis for future research on how the companies can adjust their corporate structure to the relocation process.

6.2. Challenges Faced by the Workers During the Relocation Process and Their Impacts on Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

As evidenced by the analyzed case studies, the relocation process presents many challenges for employees, particularly in the context of international moves, such as those experienced by employees in Company 1 and Company 2. These challenges significantly impact how employees perceive the support they receive from their organizations. This section explores the empirical findings on these challenges and their alignment with the perceived organizational support theory, emphasizing key aspects such as financial support, communication, peer support, and emotional well-being.

6.2.1 Financial Challenges and Perceived Inequity

As mentioned before, the costs associated with relocation, such as securing housing and managing day-to-day expenses in a new country, often led to financial restraints. In particular, junior employees struggled with these costs, as highlighted by the Junior Frontend Developer from Company 1, who incurred debt to cover relocation expenses. This finding aligns with the literature, where financial challenges during relocation are well-documented as stressors (Eby & Allen, 1998; Brett & Feldman, 1985). In many organizations, including those in the IT sector, support during relocation is often provided based on employee seniority. Senior employees typically receive more comprehensive relocation packages, including higher financial compensation, better housing options, and extensive professional support. This approach assumes senior employees have more significant needs due to their higher organizational roles, family responsibilities, or more significant lifestyle changes. The stratification of support based on seniority, although practical from a managerial standpoint, can create perceptions of inequity among junior employees. According to POS theory, fairness and equity are pivotal in fostering positive perceptions of organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). When support is perceived as unevenly distributed, it can lead to feelings of underappreciation and reduced organizational commitment among the employees. However, the findings introduce a more nuanced understanding within POS theory that support must be provided and perceived as fair and equitable across different levels of the organization. It suggests that POS is not just about

the quantity or quality of support but how that support is distributed relative to other employees, which adds a layer of complexity to the theory. POS theory could be expanded to include a deeper consideration of how support distribution impacts employees at different organizational levels. The theory traditionally focuses on the presence of support but could benefit from incorporating how equitable the distribution of that support is perceived across the organization. This addition would highlight the importance of providing support and ensuring that it is perceived as fair and just, thereby maintaining high levels of POS across all employee tiers.

6.2.2 Communication Gaps and Long-Term Trust

Communication was another area where challenges significantly influenced employees' perceptions of organizational support. Regular check-ins and dedicated communication channels helped employees feel supported and valued. The impact of communication on POS is not limited to the immediate relocation period; it can have long-term effects on how employees perceive their relationship with the organization. If employees consistently experience strong, proactive communication, they are likelier to develop a lasting sense of trust and commitment to the organization. POS theory could be expanded to consider the long-term effects of communication practices on employee loyalty and retention. This could involve studying how communication during critical periods, like relocation, shapes long-term perceptions of support and whether it leads to sustained improvements in employee engagement and organizational commitment. Effective communication is a core component of POS as it helps reinforce the organization's commitment to its employees (Eisenberger et al., 2020b). However, the findings suggest inconsistent communication can undermine this perception, leading to employees' frustration and feelings of abandonment. The impact of communication on POS extends beyond the immediate relocation period; it can shape long-term perceptions of trust and loyalty toward the organization. It also suggests that organizations should prioritize proactive and consistent communication to sustain positive perceptions of support, especially during periods of significant change. The study again emphasized that emotional and psychological support significantly affect the relocation process. The lack of structured psychological assistance was a notable gap that affected employees' well-being and perception of organizational support. Employees from both companies highlighted the support they received from their colleagues, which provided a sense of community and mutual assistance during the transition. This aligns with the concept of socio-emotional support discussed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Shore (1995), which emphasizes the role of social connections in enhancing POS. The creation of peer support networks helped employees navigate relocation

challenges, reinforcing their perception of organizational support. The findings of this case study suggest that peer support networks can serve as a critical buffer when organizational support is perceived as inadequate. While POS theory traditionally emphasizes support from the organization itself, the results highlight that peer support can fill this gap when organizational support is lacking or delayed (such as during complex relocations). This indicates that POS might only partially depend on direct support from the organization but can also be maintained or even enhanced through strong peer networks. Thus, POS theory could be expanded to include the concept of peer-mediated support, where the strength and availability of peer networks are recognized as vital components of Perceived Organizational Support.

The emotional and psychological challenges associated with relocation were significant, particularly given the stressful context of political instability that drove the need for relocation in the first place. Despite the evident need, the study revealed a notable gap in providing structured psychological assistance by both companies. According to POS theory, addressing employees' emotional and psychological needs is crucial for fostering a strong sense of support (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The lack of such support can lead to increased stress, reduced job satisfaction, and, ultimately, lower levels of POS. The findings underscore the importance of integrating emotional and psychological support into the overall framework of organizational support, particularly during high-stress transitions such as relocation. The comparative analysis of Company 1 and Company 2's relocation strategies reveals that more financial and logistical support is required. The findings emphasize that the perception of fairness in support distribution, mainly regarding financial aid, plays a crucial role in shaping employees' sense of organizational support. In the fast-paced IT industry, where hierarchies are often flat, perceived inequities can significantly impact morale and commitment. Additionally, communication during relocation is key to maintaining trust and engagement. The importance of consistent, proactive communication cannot be overstated, especially in high-stress situations like international relocation. This study suggests that POS theory could benefit from a deeper integration of these elements, focusing on the presence how it is perceived across different employee levels. Furthermore, the emotional and psychological challenges employees face during relocation highlight the need for a more holistic approach to organizational support. The absence of structured psychological assistance in both companies suggests a gap that POS theory must address. The role of peer support networks also emerged as a critical, yet often overlooked, component of POS. These networks can effectively complement formal support mechanisms, particularly in stressful and uncertain environments. Overall, the findings suggest

that relocation can catalyze broader organizational change, offering an opportunity to re-evaluate and enhance support structures to better meet the complex needs of employees in the IT industry.

Chapter 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents the key conclusions from the comparative analysis, highlighting how organizational support shaped the experiences and challenges of Belarusian IT workers relocating to Poland. The study examined partial and complete relocations, highlighting Company 1's strategy of maintaining some operations in Belarus while relocating employees abroad, versus Company 2's full relocation initially to Georgia and subsequently to Poland. This differentiation enriches relocation theory by demonstrating varied organizational strategies in response to crises, emphasizing employee agency and voluntariness in successful relocations. The analysis, centered around POS theory provides insights into the relationship of personalized vs. structured support, financial and non-financial rewards, and the balance between fairness and flexibility. This summary underscores the unique contributions of this study to the literature on relocation and POS.

7.1. Summary of Findings

The research conducted in this thesis aimed to explore the relocation support strategies employed by two IT companies, referred to as Company 1 and Company 2, with a focus on how these strategies influenced POS among relocated employees. Thus, the findings contribute to the study of relocation processes in the IT sector by revealing the challenges, support mechanisms, and their effects on employees' perceptions of their organizations. Table 7 below demonstrates the key findings of the research answering the research questions.

Research Question	Key Findings	Details	Contributions to Literature
1. What organizational support mechanisms can be effective in contributing to the satisfaction of IT workers relocated because of the political crisis?	Tailored Financial Support	Providing financial support based on individual needs rather than seniority ensures equity, which is critical in maintaining high POS.	Expands POS theory by emphasizing the importance of perceived fairness in financial support distribution during crisis-driven relocations.
	Proactive Communication	Regular, transparent communication helps maintain trust and reduces anxiety	Suggests that POS theory should incorporate the long-term effects of communication

		during the relocation process.	practices on employee trust, particularly during high-stress periods like relocation.
	Emotional and Psychological Support	Offering structured psychological support and facilitating peer support networks are essential to address the emotional challenges of relocation.	Extends POS theory to include emotional and psychological support as crucial elements of organizational care, especially during politically driven relocations.
2. What are the challenges faced by Belarusian IT workers during the relocation process to Poland, and how do these challenges impact their Perceived Organizational Support?	Financial Strain	High costs associated with relocation, especially for junior employees, led to feelings of inequity and decreased satisfaction with organizational support.	Highlights the impact of financial challenges on POS, suggesting the need for more nuanced support mechanisms that consider individual financial constraints.
	Visa and Legal Complications	Navigating visa and legal issues was a significant challenge, with proactive legal support from the organization helping to alleviate stress.	Reinforces the importance of logistical and legal support in maintaining high levels of POS during international relocations.
	Housing and Logistical Difficulties	Securing housing remotely was challenging, with varying effectiveness of organizational support in this area.	Aligns with relocation theory, emphasizing the critical role of practical logistical support in enhancing employee satisfaction during relocation.
	Emotional and Psychological Stress	The lack of structured psychological support increased stress, with peer networks playing a crucial role in	Suggests that POS theory should include the role of peer support networks in maintaining employee well-being when formal

		mitigating these challenges.	organizational support is inadequate.
3. How does the relocation theory apply to the experiences of Belarusian IT workers during their relocation process?	Involuntary Voluntariness	The decision to relocate was often influenced by external factors like political instability, making the choice to relocate feel obligatory rather than voluntary.	Expands relocation theory by introducing the concept of "involuntary voluntariness," where nominally voluntary relocations are heavily influenced by external pressures, complicating the voluntary/involuntary dichotomy.
	Two-Stage Relocation Process	Company 2's two-stage relocation strategy (first to Georgia, then to Poland) added complexity but allowed time for strategic decision-making.	Challenges the traditional view of relocation as a single event, suggesting that multi-stage relocations might be more effective in complex geopolitical contexts.
	Relocation as a Catalyst for Organizational Change	Large-scale relocations led to broader changes in company management structures, HR practices, and corporate culture.	Suggests that relocation can act as a driver for organizational transformation, offering new perspectives on how relocation can trigger strategic renewal and innovation within companies.

Table 7: Summary of Findings. Source: Author

The study revealed the following implications for the existing POS theory and Relocation related theories:

1. Equity in Support Distribution: A Nuanced Understanding of Fairness

One of the most profound expansions to POS theory comes from the observation that the perception of fairness in the distribution of support is as critical as the support itself. Traditional POS theory emphasizes the importance of fairness in fostering positive employee outcomes, but these findings suggest a deeper layer of complexity. When support, particularly financial

assistance during relocation, is stratified based on seniority, it can create a perception of inequity among junior employees. This perceived inequity can undermine the overall sense of support, even if the organization provides substantial resources. The findings suggest that fairness in POS is not just about treating all employees equally but ensuring that support is perceived as just and appropriate relative to each employee's needs and circumstances. This expands POS theory by highlighting the importance of relative fairness—where comparing what different employees receive becomes a critical factor in shaping their perceptions of support. This nuanced understanding of fairness demands that organizations carefully consider how support is allocated to maintain a positive and equitable organizational environment.

2. Communication as a Long-Term Foundation for Trust and POS

The role of communication during relocation expands POS theory by emphasizing its long-term impact on employee trust and organizational commitment. While POS theory recognizes communication as a critical component of perceived support, the findings suggest that the consistency and proactivity of communication during high-stress periods like relocation have lasting effects on how employees perceive their relationship with the organization. The insight here is that effective communication does more than address immediate needs—it builds a foundation of trust that sustains positive perceptions of organizational support long after the stressful period. This suggests that POS theory should incorporate a long-term perspective on communication, considering how practices during critical moments can shape enduring employee attitudes. By recognizing the lasting impact of communication, organizations can better strategize their support mechanisms to ensure sustained employee engagement and loyalty.

3. Peer-Mediated Support: A Complementary Dimension to POS

Another significant expansion to POS theory is the concept of peer-mediated support, where peer networks within the organization play a crucial role in maintaining or even enhancing POS. The findings reveal that when formal organizational support may be lacking or delayed during relocation, strong peer relationships can fill this gap, providing the necessary socioemotional support that reinforces employees' sense of belonging and security. This expands POS theory by suggesting that perceived support is not solely dependent on the organization's actions but can be significantly influenced by the strength and availability of peer networks. This dimension of peer-mediated support highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative and supportive

work culture where employees feel empowered to support each other. Incorporating this into POS theory would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how different sources of support within an organization interact to shape overall employee perceptions.

4. The Critical Role of Emotional and Psychological Support in POS

Finally, the findings highlight the critical role of emotional and psychological support in shaping POS, particularly during high-stress situations like relocation. Traditional POS theory emphasizes the importance of socio-emotional support, but these findings suggest that structured psychological assistance is an essential yet often overlooked component of organizational support. The lack of such support can lead to significant stress and dissatisfaction, particularly in environments where employees are already under considerable pressure. This insight expands POS theory by proposing that emotional and psychological support should be a core component of organizational support, not just an auxiliary consideration. By integrating this dimension, POS theory would more accurately reflect the full range of employee needs, particularly in high-stress environments, ensuring that organizations address the practical and emotional aspects of employee well-being.

5. The Concept of Involuntary Voluntariness in Relocation Decisions

The concept of "involuntary voluntariness" emerges as a crucial element in understanding the decision-making processes of employees during relocation, particularly in politically and economically unstable environments. Traditional relocation theory often distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary relocations, assuming a clear-cut decision-making process where employees either choose to move or are forced to do so by external circumstances. However, the findings from this study suggest that more than this binary framework is needed to capture the complexities of real-world situations. In the context of Belarusian IT workers, "involuntary voluntariness" describes a scenario where employees are presented with the option to relocate, yet external pressures—such as political repression, threats of criminal charges, and economic instability—effectively compel them to accept. While the decision is nominally voluntary, the overwhelming influence of these external factors chooses to stay practically unfeasible. This situation challenges the traditional understanding of voluntariness in relocation decisions. It suggests that circumstances beyond the employees' control may heavily coerce many relocations classified as voluntary. This insight proposes that voluntariness should be viewed on a spectrum, acknowledging that external pressures can heavily influence technically

voluntary decisions. This concept not only reshapes the landscape of relocation theory by moving beyond the simplistic voluntary-involuntary divide but also introduces a critical perspective that is largely unexplored in the existing literature. While broader discussions on voluntariness exist in ethical and philosophical contexts, applying this lens to the specific challenges of employee relocation under duress is both innovative and timely. Recognizing this dynamic is crucial for organizations aiming to support their employees effectively during relocations, as it highlights the importance of understanding the broader context in which these decisions are made. The concept of "involuntary voluntariness" can be applied beyond the context of employee relocation to various situations where individuals appear to have a choice but are effectively compelled by external pressures. For instance, it can be used to analyze decisions made by refugees or migrants who ostensibly choose to leave their home countries due to conflict or economic hardship but are, in reality, driven by circumstances that leave them little genuine alternative. It can also be relevant in corporate settings where employees might "volunteer" for certain tasks or roles under subtle coercion, such as fear of job loss or peer pressure. Additionally, this concept could provide valuable insights in legal and ethical discussions surrounding consent, particularly in cases where individuals consent to agreements or medical treatments under conditions of duress or limited options. By applying "involuntary voluntariness" across these diverse contexts, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities behind decisions that appear voluntary on the surface but are, in fact, heavily influenced by external forces. This expanded view calls for a more compassionate and supportive approach from organizations that acknowledges the complex realities their employees face and offers robust support mechanisms to mitigate the stress and pressure associated with such forced choices.

7.2. Practical Implications

POS theory emphasizes the importance of reciprocity in the employer-employee relationship. In high-risk environments, such as the political turmoil in Belarus, the need for organizational support becomes more pronounced. The relocation of IT workers underscores the significance of reciprocal support, where the company's investment in employee well-being during crises fosters a strong sense of loyalty and commitment among employees. Moreover, the relocation of the Belarusian IT workers demonstrate the effectiveness of various supportive mechanisms such as financial aid, legal assistance, housing support, and emotional and psychological help. These mechanisms were crucial in mitigating the stress and challenges associated with

relocation, thereby enhancing POS. The interviewees were asked to share their recommendations about how the relocation should be organized, which were merged with the thesis findings.

7.2.1. For Entrepreneurs

Proactive Communication. Inform workers about potential relocations as soon as possible. Early communication helps mitigate anxiety and prepares employees mentally and logistically for the move. Delays in communication can cause stress and a sense of insecurity among employees.

Housing Support. Provide comprehensive housing support. The real estate market in destination countries might be saturated, making it difficult for employees to find suitable housing. Companies should consider including housing assistance in relocation packages to ease the transition.

Mental Health Support. Relocation is not just a physical move but also a significant mental adjustment. Providing access to mental health resources, including corporate psychologists, can help employees cope with the stress and challenges of relocation.

Support for Relocation Specialists. Ensure that relocation specialists have manageable workloads and are well-compensated. High turnover among relocation staff can disrupt the relocation process for employees. Providing additional benefits or support to these specialists can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the relocation process.

7.2.2. For Relocating Employees

Preparation. Workers should thoroughly prepare, try to understand financial implications, secure housing, and engage with the cultural nuances of the host country. They should research and plan extensively, covering legal, financial, and socio-cultural aspects. Pay big attention to the accommodation search.

Community Integration. Join local communities/chats, participate in community activities.

Expectations. Set realistic expectations regarding professional growth and personal adaptation. Understand and prepare for the socio-cultural context and potential challenges in the new community.

7.2.3. For Governments

Policy Development. Develop policies that facilitate the relocation of businesses and employees during political or economic crises. Simplifying visa processes, offering financial incentives, and providing logistical support can significantly aid companies and employees in their transition.

Education and Training. Invest in education and training programs to maintain a skilled workforce. Supporting technical education and continuous professional development ensures local talent remains competitive and attractive to international companies.

7.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the significant insights gained from this study on the relocation of Belarusian IT workers to Poland after 2020, several limitations need to be acknowledged: the research focused on a limited sample of IT professionals from only two companies, Company 1 and Company 2. This admittedly small sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Belarusian IT workers and other industries. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample of IT workers from various companies and sectors. Comparative studies examining different industries and countries could identify commonalities and differences in relocation experiences and outcomes. Moreover, the study primarily relied on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, which, while providing deep and rich insights, are subjective. The reliance on self-reported data from employees and managers could introduce bias. Future studies should incorporate quantitative methods, such as large-scale surveys and statistical analyses, to complement the qualitative insights. This approach could help identify key success factors, challenges, and the relative importance of various support mechanisms in the relocation process. The political and economic environments in Belarus and Poland are dynamic, with ongoing changes that could affect the relevance of the findings over time. Future research should consider longitudinal studies that track the relocation processes and outcomes over an extended period to capture evolving trends and long-term impacts. While the survey highlighted the psychological and emotional challenges faced by relocated employees, it did not profoundly explore the long-term mental health impacts. Future research could delve deeper into these aspects, employing psychological assessments and longitudinal tracking to understand better the mental health outcomes of relocated IT workers. Research comparing the relocation experiences of Belarusian IT workers in different destination countries could provide

insights into how varying regulatory environments, cultural contexts, and support systems impact the success of relocations. Such studies could inform best practices for supporting relocated workers in diverse settings. Examining the role of government policies and regulatory environments in facilitating or hindering the relocation of IT professionals could provide valuable insights as well. Comparative studies of different policy frameworks and their impact on the relocation and integration of IT workers would be particularly valuable. Investigating the effectiveness of inclusion and diversity strategies in supporting relocated IT workers could offer actionable insights for companies. Understanding how inclusivity and diversity in organizational practices impact the integration and success of relocated employees could help develop more supportive relocation policies. By addressing these limitations and exploring these areas, future research can build a more comprehensive understanding of IT workers' relocation processes and support mechanisms, ultimately contributing to more effective strategies for managing talent mobility in a globalized world.

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