

Framing Migration and Belonging: A Critical Discourse Analysis of European Prime Ministerial Speeches

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Abstract

This study conducts a critical discourse analysis of European prime ministerial speeches on migration and national belonging, using Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Nair's postcolonial theory. It explores how political discourse constructs migration as a site of legitimacy and control, focusing on language that shapes conditional belonging and exclusion. The findings reveal that both speeches reproduce bordered humanitarianism, where migrants are framed through crisis narratives, legal vulnerability, and procedural compliance. Europe is discursively positioned as a normative center of ethical and legal governance, while migrant legitimacy is granted selectively based on legality or suffering. The study highlights the persistence of postcolonial hierarchies in European discourse and calls for more inclusive, agentive, and epistemologically just models of migrant representation.

Key words: Migration Discourse, Conditional Belonging, Postcolonial Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), European Political Speeches



تأثير الهجرة والانتماء : تحليل خطاب نقي لخطابات رؤساء الوزراء الأوروبيين

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ملخص البحث

يتناول هذا البحث تحليل الخطاب النقي لخطابات رؤساء وزراء أوروبا حول الهجرة والانتماء الوطني، من خلال نموذج فركلاف ثلاثي الأبعاد ونظرية نير لما بعد الاستعمار. يهدف إلى الكشف عن كيفية بناء الخطاب السياسي للهجرة كأداة للشرعية والسلطة، مع التركيز على اللغة المستخدمة في تشكيل الانتماء المشروط والتهميش. أظهرت النتائج أن الخطابين المدروسين يعيidan إنتاج منطق إنساني مؤطر وحدودي، حيث يُعرض المهاجرون من خلال سردية الأزمة، الشرعية القانونية، والضعف الإجرائي. كما يُعاد تشكيل أوروبا كمركز معياري أخلاقي وقانوني، بينما تُمنح شرعية الانتماء للمهاجرين بشكل مشروط وفقاً للامتثال القانوني أو المعاناة الإنسانية. تكشف الدراسة عن استمرار التسلسل الهرمي ما بعد الاستعمار في الخطاب الأوروبي، وتدعى إلى نماذج أكثر شمولاً وإنصافاً معرفياً في تمثيل الهجرة

الكلمات المفتاحية : خطاب الهجرة، الانتماء المشروط، نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، التحليل النقي للخطاب ، الخطابات السياسية الأوروبي



1. Introduction

Migration has been one of the most powerful stages in human progress, Thus, Migration is a story of elasticity and confidence. Migration is regarded as a political challenge in the European union, drawing increasing attention to the discourse employed by political leaders. The speeches of European prime ministers have become increasingly significant in shaping national identity explicitly in shaping who belongs, who is perceived as a threat, and who is to be included. The contribution of this study lies in its application of Fairclough's critical discourse and Nair's postcolonial frameworks to European Prime Ministerial Speeches, concentrating on modern political discourse, actual language practice, and the ideological structure of migration in the EU.

This study admits a critical discourse analysis of prime ministerial speeches in certain European settings in an effort to study how migration and belonging are broadly constructed. By Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA, the analysis encounters textual features of these speeches (lexical items, grammatical forms, metaphors), conversational practices determining their structure and reading, and broader-scale sociocultural terms upon which their philosophical stations are created. This framework provides for multidimensional political discourse reading communication, as a power field, controversy, and identity-structure.

This research is based on postcoloniality and migration studies. These frameworks shed light on the ability of migrants in constructing the racial or cultural elements for others, how national borders are reinforced broadly beyond their material words. As such, self-importance by prime ministers becomes an act of nationhood or as a controversial performance on the verge of citizenship, legality, and feature.

Through strategic lexical choices and ideologically constructed formations, political leaders construct perception, argument, and ultimately policy on immigration. This accords with van Dijk's (2008) assertion that "discourse lies at the core of racism, particularly in modern societies" (p. 34), highlighting the ways in which language is key to make exclusionary logics and legitimating policy decisions.

By creating these frameworks, the study aims to discover the political work present in leading political discourse and diagram the language method that is used as a tool of representative violence and political legalization. In so doing, it pays to rise knowledge about the discursive frameworks that underlie exclusionary logics of Europe today, with an attention on the moral suggestions of how be in the home place is narrative-told.

1.1 Research Questions

The proposed study is planned to make a critical discourse analysis of a selection of political speeches that serve to explore the linguistic and methods utilized by European leaders to discuss migration in the EU which is regarded as a controversial issue. Accordingly, examining the linguistic aspects utilized by these political leaders in their speeches the following questions will be addressed:

1. what the ways do European prime ministers generally generate migration and national belonging in ministerial speeches?
2. to what extent are varied sociocultural principles close migration embodied and replicated in ministerial speeches?
3. How do textual and discursive practices differ across national contexts in framing migration?
4. To what extent do these speeches legitimize strategy and support figurative restrictions of nationality?

1.2 Aims of the Study

This study tries to examine the ability of European prime ministers in constructing migration and citizenship involvement in their official speeches. The study attempt to discover the linguistic and ideological devices through which political leaders persuade public opinion, legitimate policy, and broker representative boundaries of presence and prohibiting.

this study follows the following goals:

- investigating the textual features of lexical patterns, linguistic structures, and figurative frames that show meaning concerning migration and citizenship.



- examining conversational performances in the construction and response of speeches, such as intertextual references and official environments.
- showing how language shapes power relationships and ideology.

Overall, the main reason for choosing this topic is to explore to what extent the linguistic structures used by politicians play an important role in delivering their political messages

2. Review of literature

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Political speeches are the crucial activity that links the different parts of society together and allow them to be as united entire. The core of political speech is the ability of the politician to use language and symbols that wake latent tendencies among the masses. Politics is a means for power in order to put certain political, economic and social concepts into practice. Language plays an essential role, for every political action is prepared, attended, influenced and played by language. so language and politics are closely interleaved.

There is a strong relationship between language and politics. Politics is the struggle for power; it is the struggle for making political decisions and taking political, economic and social actions. This can only be done through language. Christina Schaffner maintains that “any political action is prepared, accompanied, controlled and influenced by language” (Partington, 2002, P.26). According to Chilton and Schaffner (2002), “Politics and language are intimately intertwined. To link the study of these dimensions is to seek to understand something very central to human behavior” (2002: P.16).

Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak (1997) maintain that

Critical discourse analysis . . . analyses real and often extended instances of social interaction which take a linguistic form, or a partially linguistic form. The critical approach is distinctive in its view of (a) the relationship between language and society, and (b) the relationship between analysis and the practices analysed (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, P. 258).

In other words, they state that Critical discourse analysis is the link between a text and society and they consider discourse as a form of social practice. Concerning the area of political discourse analysis, Van Dijk has called for discourse analysis to be a 'genuine social,

political or cultural analysis' (Van Dijk, 1985, P.164). According to Fairclough, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is interested in the study of the relation between two hypotheses about language use, thus language use is shaped socially, and also society shaped by language use.

Postcolonial migration studies effectively relocate migration as a complex process of power, displacement, and enduring colonial relations. Mains et al. (2013) suggest three imperative interventions in migration scholarship, including problematizing hierarchical notions of identity and challenging spatial relations between places. Parvati Nair et al. (2013) emphasize that migration is all about dislocation, particularly for migrants from postcolonial countries with class, race, and ethnic problems.

Migration is exposed as a politically charged process deeply embedded in historical power dynamics. Thus Sadiq et al., (2021) provides concrete empirical depth by way of the formulation of the concept of the "postcolonial migration state," highlighting how recently independent states emulate mobility regulations of colonial times. Mains et al. (2013, 133) note that "the potential for post-colonial theory to fundamentally change how we understand migration is underexplored."

Mains et al., 2013 argue that "extending postcolonial boundaries happen by questioning longitudinal networks and stimulating ordered identity categories". Also, Nair et al. (2013) emphasize that "the profound dislocation experienced by migrants from postcolonial nations, particularly highlighting issues of class, subjugation, and exploitation". Sadiq et al. (2021) assert "the postcolonial states reproduce colonial mobility controls through surveillance and segmented migration management".

3. Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is utilized an eclectic method that overlap between Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of CDA with the Parvati Nair's postcolonial theory of migration. This type of examination reveals the ability of European ministerial speeches in framing migration and belonging in rooted power constructions. In this address, Nair shapes migration as a substance of national safety, making it a crucial setting for analyzing how political discourse on migration is constructed.



3.1.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA

Fairclough's model theorizes discourse as a dialectic interface between:

- 1. Textual analysis**, which explores linguistic factors such as transitivity, modality, and lexical features that transport meaning regarding relocation and citizenship issues.
- 2. Discursive practice**, which investigates the abilities of political methods in making, socializing, and getting official and media places.
- 3. Social Practice**, which examines the discourse within wider socio-political practices, such as current migration domination and processes of neighboring.

These concepts offer a theoretical model for showing the role of political account in encoding linguistic and social practices, particularly in leading political discourse.

3.1.2 Postcolonial Migration Theory: Dislocation and Conditional Belonging

To enhance the descriptive scope of CDA, the study exhibits Parvati Nair's (2013) postcolonial approach, which regards the displacement as structural condition of migrant existence would be more precise. Nair claims that migration is not merely physical movement but an epistemological disagreement, where refugees, especially those from former gatherings, are broadly located as extraterrestrials. Estrangement is frequently emblazoned in:

- Lexical expressions of danger and nonconformity
- Humanitarian cases that foreground through movement processes

These discourse strategies duplicate foreign validity and citizenship issues, wherein migrants become noticeable only by way of discoursal borders of danger, need, or integration. It achieves this, according to Fairclough's third dimension, social practice, by demonstrating how political discourse contributes to the imitation of racialized and classed flexibility in governments. Thus, "belonging is not a given; it is granted through legal recognition and always subject to withdrawal." (Nair, 2013, p. 62)

3.2 Data Collection

The corpus that is applied in this study is consisted of two European prime ministers' speeches that discuss migration within the context of modern governance. The selection draws on relevance to postcolonial theory around migration, and broad framing that are significance to the study's critical discourse analytical framework. Bearing in mind the importance of political language in controlling societies, it is worth investigating the political language used to by governments or political parties to encourage society or to agitate attitudes from the members of the society.

3.2.1 Corpus Composition

3.2.1.1 First Speech

EU Pact on Migration and Asylum speech, which is centered on the framework of EU migration policy, urging representatives to sign off on the Pact as a worldwide explanation to face challenges.

She begins with a people-first definition of migration through saying that "Migration is about human beings, men, women, and children" and changes into a demand for legislative intervention. Johansson underlines the dual obligation of European citizens to welcome those who escape war and persecution and to stop unequal arrivals. She highlights the necessity for "mandatory solidarity," "border screening," and "faster returns," framing the Pact as a stable device for controlling migration in a maintainable and respected way.

This speech expresses a strong argument for critical discourse analysis using Fairclough's CDA and Nair's postcolonial approach. It states the EU's unstable discourse on migration with securitizing domination and provisional belonging gave the EU

3.2.1.2 Second Speech

This speech was submitted by the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees (SRSG) to the Budapest Process 7th Ministerial Conference. The permissible and supportive system of European migration policy restates the dominance of international instruction and multilayered programs in defining responsible policy.

The announcement confirms that the Council of Europe's human rights and the instruction of rules are at the middle of positive organization of migration. The SRSG reminds us that human rights protection of immigrants and defense of restrictions are not equally limited purposes, and actual migration strategy depends on energetic collaboration between countries and worldwide administrations.

This speech offers a powerful case for critical discourse analysis on the lines of Fairclough's CDA and Nair's postcolonial model. Migrants find themselves entrenched in discourses of defenselessness and obedience that restate Europe as a regularized midpoint and flexibility manager. The speech thus subsidizes the wider ideational environment of postcolonial governance.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 One Speech: Analysis of Ursula von der Leyen's Speech on the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum (April 2024)

4.1.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA

Johansson's speech utilizes a lexically anxious and forcefully exciting register, inclosing migrants through a double lens of defenselessness and directive. Phrases as "protect people" as opposed to "prevent irregular arrivals," which show the divergence of charity, and this highlight security governance. The expressive attitude serves to overstate the seriousness of the migration issue, while the lexical selections reflect a conversational struggle between moral accountability and official authority.

At the discursive analysis, phrases as "I would like to thank all the rapporteurs, the shadows, and your staff," show the impact of Institutional intertextuality as the speech is implanted within parliamentary type and collaborative philosophy. Also, governmental signs are accessible as account successes in phrases as "The Asylum Agency – unblocked, The Blue Card – unblocked after many years". in these words, genre is blended as a method to combine policy reporting with enthusiastic style. the speech draws on intertextual references to UNHCR, the Munich Security Conference, and third countries.

At the level of social practice, Johansson theorize migration as a governmental and official task demanding union and authority. Sentence as "Shipwrecks with massive loss of life.



Catastrophic fires. In Lipa. In Moria”, These events are raised as charitable crises that defend EU-level interference, framing Europe as a moral center. Migration is presented as a site of tactical management, linking suppleness to safety discourse, and this attitude shows in her speaking about “Covid. Lukashenko’s attempt to create a crisis by instrumentalizing migrants”. Thus, this speech supports the space of Europe as an ethical governance.

According to Fairclough (1992, P. 9)."critical discourse shows connections and causes which are hidden; it also implies intervention, for example providing resources for those who may be disadvantaged through change". overall, this model reveals the methods of constructing legality, perseverance, and official through layered linguistic speech.

4.1.2 Postcolonial Migration Theory: Dislocation and Conditional Belonging

Postcolonial Migration Theory shows the speech as a pass's displacement by positioning migrants through crisis narratives. Phrases as “Prevent irregular arrivals and deadly journeys, and “Put your own house in order first” this sense in discourse translates refugees as fears or sufferers, supporting their presence only through disaster. Also, the Epistemic separation in the speech imitates how Europe's migration discourse is hypocritically perceived.

The ideational framing of Europe in Johansson's speech is performative and militarized “a team on the pitch” betrothed in reinstating ethical direction. Utterance as “We are now hosting more than four million Ukrainian refugees,” highlights Europe's capacity for solidarity. Migrants are concentrated intelligible primarily through humanitarian categories through phrase as “New safeguards to protect vulnerable people. Especially minors and families with children.” This model discloses how migrants are broadly situated through conditionality, susceptibility, and contiguous, often visible only in crisis.

4.2 Second Speech: Analysis of the SRSG Statement – Budapest Process (2024)

4.2.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA

Kayacik's speech adopts a formal and legalistic tone, marked by lexical consistency around rights, law, and cooperation. In the textual level, sentence as "Human rights and the rule of law are central to migration management", shows the Lexical significance and site ethical norms as initial, not marginal. The metaphorical evaluation is explored through her utterance "The mother of all Council of Europe conventions" which personalizes the European Convention on Human Rights, supporting its authority.

At the discursive level, the speech was delivered in a multilateral diplomatic setting, targeting member states and international organizations. Utterance as "On behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe..." shows Official speech through implanting the speech within political practice. The reference to Intertextuality through "I would like to mention the Council of Europe standard" cites legal instruments (ECHR, CPT, GRETA, etc.) to hypothesize the speech in a prescriptive framework.

At the level of social practice, Kayacik constructs migration as a governance issue rooted in legal instruments and monitoring mechanisms. Utterance as "Close international co-operation is key to successful migration policies", shows the governance attitude through supporting for multilateralism as a mechanical requirement in migration organization. Phrase as "Binding for Council of Europe member States" reveals the legal enforceability to emphasize the required nature of human rights legal philosophy, contradicting optional general methods.

4.2.2 Postcolonial Migration Theory: Dislocation and Conditional Belonging

From Nair's postcolonial lens, the speech enacts dislocation through institutional categorization. Migrants are positioned not through crisis or suffering, but through procedural vulnerability—defined by their compliance with legal norms and eligibility criteria. Migrants are framed as counters in geopolitical games in speech by uttering "Instrumentalization by malevolent states", supporting their inactive, actualized rank. Mentioning word as Surges" suggests usual tragedy metaphors, depicting flexibility as undermining and extraordinary.



The ideational framing of Europe in Kayacik's speech is juridical and ethical. Migrants in this speech are reduced intelligible through susceptibility classes, resounding Nair's view of conditional recognition through uttering phrase as Protection of the fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees". Also, Intersectional framing is appeared through "Convention on Protection of Children... Convention on preventing and combating violence against women..." to highlight gendered and age of the refugees.

Utterance as "Effective migration and border protection policies are not incompatible..." is regarded as an effort to reconcile securitization with rights and then frame the discursive balance in the speech. Observation and acquiescence mechanisms though speech context strengthen institutional gatekeeping.

Analytical Dimension	Speech 1: Commissioner Johansson (EU Pact)	Speech 2: SRSG Leyla Kayacik (Budapest Process)
Textual Analysis <i>(Fairclough)</i>	Emotive and urgent tone; dual framing of migrants as vulnerable and regulated. Lexical tension between humanitarianism and control (e.g., "protect people" vs. "prevent irregular arrivals").	Formal, legalistic tone; emphasis on conventions and standards. Lexical consistency around rights, law, and cooperation. Avoids emotive or securitized language.
Discursive Practice <i>(Fairclough)</i>	Delivered in European Parliament before a decisive vote; appeals to legislators, citizens, and international observers. Intertextual references to UNHCR, Munich Security Conference, and third countries.	Delivered in multilateral diplomatic setting; appeals to member states and international organizations. Intertextual references to Council of Europe conventions and EU Pact implementation.
Social Practice <i>(Fairclough)</i>	Frames migration as a challenge requiring legislative unity and institutional control. Constructs Europe as a moral and regulatory center. Reinforces bordering through screening, returns, and solidarity mechanisms.	Frames migration as a shared governance issue rooted in legal compliance. Constructs Europe as a normative anchor. Reinforces bordering through legal instruments and monitoring mechanisms.
Dislocation	Migrants positioned through crisis	Migrants positioned through legal

(Nair)	narratives (e.g., shipwrecks, fires, geopolitical manipulation). Presence justified through suffering and risk.	categories and institutional frameworks. Presence justified through procedural vulnerability and rights-based eligibility.
Conditional Belonging (Nair)	Belonging contingent on legality and vulnerability. Binary between “those fleeing war” and “those who don’t have the right to stay.”	Belonging contingent on compliance with international law and conventions. Migrants included insofar as they meet legal and procedural norms.
Ideational Framing of Europe	Europe as a team on the pitch—mobilized, responsive, and morally accountable. Civilizational narrative of restoring order and values.	Europe as a stabilizing legal force—normative, cooperative, and rights-driven. Civilizational narrative of legal stewardship and ethical governance.
Migrant Agency	Migrants largely passive; framed through need, risk, and return. Agency subordinated to institutional action.	Migrants framed as subjects of protection; agency absent. Rights granted through institutional recognition, not self-representation.

Table one

Comparative Analysis of CDA Dimensions

4.3 Discussion

This study examined two senior-level European speeches on migration, Commissioner Johansson's plenary address on the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum (April 2024) and the Council of Europe declaration delivered by the SRSG at the Budapest Process 7th Ministerial Conference (November 2024), based on the double analysis of Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis and Parvati Nair's (2013) postcolonial dislocation theory and conditional belonging.

The two speeches prioritize humanitarian values and institutional duty, but diverge rhetorically and ideologically. Johansson's speech is marked by urgency, performativity, and dual framing. Migration is conceived as a moral and legislative problem, with repeated mentions of European values, citizen demand, and geopolitical duty. The terms between



defense and authority, rendering migrants as places of concern and instruction. Such ambivalence is reflected in Fairclough's discursive tension and is consistent with Nair's conditional belonging theory, whereby legitimacy is afforded in selected ways on the grounds of vulnerability, legality, and conformity to institutional rules.

Kayacik's speech has an official and legalistic manner. Migration is framed as an international governance issue, located within intercontinental rule and multidimensional collaboration. Emotional language is avoided and invoked in this speech by showing the role of official authority. Mentioning the protection procedures also applies a technocratic reasonableness that realizes flexibility by documentation and examination.

The language in two speeches places Europe as a prescriptive center and accountable for regulating movement, safeguarding values, and reconfiguring. This placement reproduces postcolonial hierarchies, whereby Europe continues to hold epistemic power over who is counted, on what terms, and through what means. The two speeches convey a similar message by imitating the same enclosed humanitarianism. as, migrants become visible primarily in the language of crisis, risk, and managed inclusion.

Also, the two speeches confirm the externalization of control over migration. Calls for third-country involvement, Silk Routes collaboration, and globalized frameworks outline a trend towards the regulation of migration beyond European borders. This strategy, while expressed as partnership, often reinscribes non-reciprocal relations of power and conditional communication. Migrants who come from erstwhile colonies are discursively made into objects of intervention rather than actors in policy-making.

In total, the analysis illustrates how elite European migration discourse—whether legislative or diplomatic remains encoding ideational hierarchies of legitimacy, belonging, and control. In using Fairclough's CDA, this study shows the ability of institutional authority in constructing language and the ability of discursive uncertainty functions. Through Nair's postcolonial reading, this study shows the logic of dislocation that perseveres and the conditionality under which refugee perceptibility arises. These findings strengthen the need for more widespread, and decolonial migration domination ones that cover outside enclosed anxiety and move towards epistemological fairness.

Dimension	EU Pact Speech	Council of Europe Speech
Textual	Urgent, emotive, action-driven	Formal, legalistic, normative
Discursive	Legislative ethos, compromise rhetoric	Institutional authority, legal intertextuality
Social Practice	Crisis-driven governance, conditional solidarity	Rule-of-law anchoring, multilateralism
Postcolonial Lens	Migrants as subjects of crisis and control	Migrants as rights-bearers within legal frameworks, but still framed through vulnerability

Table Two**Dimensions of Two European Migration Speeches**

These two speeches hypothesize migrants as themes of safety despite their different expression. Johansson shapes belonging through governmental act and conditional harmony, whereas Kayacik put it in authorized responsibility and humanitarian ethics.

5. Conclusion

The study critically examined two institutional addresses on European migration policy-making using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis and Parvati Nair's postcolonial theory of dislocation and conditional belonging. The analysis revealed that both Commissioner Johansson's plenary address and the SRSG's Budapest Process address construct migration on discourses of humanitarian concern, legal compliance, and institutional control. Each speech replicates bordered humanitarianism and provisional inclusion, in which migrants are placed discursively through vulnerability, legality, and crisis. These findings highlight the manner in which postcolonial hierarchies continue to be salient within leading European discourse and suggest that more agentive, expansive, and decolonial migrant policy and representation are needed.

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Footnotes list

1. Van Dijk (2008) argues that discourse lies at the core of racism in modern societies, emphasizing the role of language in producing exclusionary logics and legitimizing policy.
2. Schaffner (2002) maintains that every political action is prepared, executed, and influenced through language, reinforcing the deep link between politics and discourse.
3. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) define critical discourse analysis as the study of real social interactions in linguistic form, highlighting the relationship between language and society.
4. Fairclough (1992) states that critical discourse reveals hidden connections and causes, and implies intervention to support disadvantaged groups.
5. Nair (2013) asserts that belonging is not guaranteed—it is granted through legal recognition and remains subject to withdrawal.

6. Nair emphasizes that migrants are often discursively framed as outsiders, marked by lexical patterns of danger and nonconformity.
7. Johansson's speech uses phrases like "protect people" versus "prevent irregular arrivals," reflecting the tension between humanitarianism and control.
8. Kayacik's speech centers on legal and ethical norms, with expressions like "Human rights and the rule of law are central to migration management."
9. The phrase "mother of all Council of Europe conventions" in Kayacik's speech metaphorically elevates the European Convention on Human Rights as a foundational legal authority.
10. The term "instrumentalization by malevolent states" frames migrants as passive objects in geopolitical conflicts.
11. Migrants in Kayacik's speech are recognized through procedural vulnerability, with inclusion contingent on legal compliance.
12. References to conventions on child protection and violence against women highlight intersectional framing in migration discourse.