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**Are Services Perceived as Masculine or Feminine?
Comparisons of American and Turkish Millennials' Perceptions¹**

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Are Services Perceived as Masculine or Feminine? Comparisons of American and Turkish Millennials' Perceptions

Abstract

More women and millennials have entered the workforce, especially in growing service industries. Several studies have examined the potential effects of gender on various issues, including gender stereotyping. Millennials are the future workforce. It is important therefore to study their perceptions of gender stereotyping since they have important implications for human resources and employment in services. The main objective of this study is to investigate service-gender stereotyping among millennials overall as well as across cultures and genders using data from America and Turkey. The results, based on 203 useable surveys from the USA and 259 from Turkey, revealed an existence of service-gender stereotyping. This study found that police are perceived as a male-oriented service and nurses as a female-oriented service across cultures and gender.

Keywords: *Service stereotyping, Service-gender effect, Millennials, Service-culture effects, Service-gender orientation*

Introduction

A number of studies have investigated the potential effects of gender on such issues as recruiting, selling effectiveness, and service quality. Prior research examined the perception of whether a service is perceived as male-oriented or female-oriented (Pinar, Wilder, Filipek, & Karaatli 2016; Pinar, Schiffel, Strasser, & Stuck 2013; Pinar et al., 2009). A study by Wilder et al. (2017) have suggested an existence of service-gender stereotyping among millennials and have found significant differences across cultures. Several studies have also examined issues related to millennials. A survey of millennials from 29 countries (Deloitte, 2016) has shown that millennials believe in an inclusive working culture and strong commitment to equality. Millennials do not define diversity as a mixture of people from different races, religions, or genders, but rather a mixture of different ideas and perspectives (Smith & Turner, 2015). Given their positive attitudes about diversity, millennials are expected to have similar perceptions of service-gender

stereotyping. Millennials will comprise nearly 75% percent of the workforce by 2025 (Bentley University, 2013) thereby defining the future work environment (Smith and Turner, 2015).

Background and Theoretical Foundation

There are three main theories used to explain different gender effects (e.g., Graves & Powel, 1995; Crosby et al., 1990; Dwyer et al., 1998; Pinar et al. 2009). First, Similarity-Attraction Paradigm (Byrne, 1971; Byrne & Neuman, 1992; Graves & Powell, 1995) (SAP) defines similarity as the degree to which members of a group are alike in terms of personal characteristics (Byrne and Neuman, 1992; Smith, 1998). Similarity is an important basis of interpersonal attraction as well as social integration (Baron and Pfeffer, 1994). Second, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1986) (SIT) suggests that an individual's self-identity formation is partly a result of group membership. According to SIT, belonging to a group creates a psychological state that confers social identity. Third, Self-Categorization Theory (Turner, 1982, 1985) (SCT), as an important part of SAP and SIT, suggests that individuals are positively disposed toward categories of socially defined characteristics that reflect personal similarity and vice versa. SCT indicates that social categories such as gender, age, and race (McNeilly and Russ, 2000; Messick and Mackie 1989) can produce perceived similarity to other members of a category or group, which in turn triggers stereotyping of the out-group. These theories collectively predict that services with feminine perception will be perceived as female-oriented services, whereas those services with masculine perception will be perceived as male-oriented services. A prior study by Pinar et al. (2009) found that 18 college majors were perceived as being either male-oriented, female-oriented or gender neutral, which was influenced by the students' own gender.

With more women in the work force, it appears gender equality is on the rise. More millennials are entering occupations previously dominated by one gender. This trend seems to be occurring across different cultures. Yet a question remains as to whether gender has an effect on service-gender stereotyping. A study by Pinar et al. (2016) provides support for the assertion that service gender-orientation stereotyping still exists. As globalization and social media brings cultures closer, differences across cultures may be disappearing for millennials. In fact, recent research (Daukas, 2013; Dolloite 2016; Smith & Turner, 2015) indicates that millennials have moved beyond the integration of demographic differences, and are recognized for their acceptance of diversity. Millennials' perceptions of service gender-orientation could have important

implications for employment in service businesses. This study intends to investigate an existence of service-gender stereotyping among millennials, as well as the influence of cultural differences on perceptions of service-gender stereotyping across two cultures, the USA and Turkey.

The specific research objectives (ROs) are:

1. to examine whether there is perceived service-gender-stereotyping overall and across cultures (USA and Turkey).
2. to compare whether the perception of service-gender stereotyping is different a) by culture (USA vs Turkey) and gender (male vs female) and b) by gender (male vs female) within each culture, the USA and Turkey.
3. to discuss the implications of the findings.

Methodology

In order to accomplish the research objectives (ROs), a survey instrument was designed that included a number of services commonly available in the USA and Turkey. In developing the list of services, we first generated a large list of services that covered a diverse set of industries. Since the main objective of the study was to examine the perception of service-gender stereotyping, we solicited feedback from a number of faculty members to assure that our questionnaire included services that were perceived as male-oriented, female-oriented, or gender neutral. Based on feedback we identified 17 services to be used for the study that are shown in the Appendix. These services were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from -2 = definitely male-oriented, to 0=neither male nor female-oriented, and 2=definitely female.

The initial survey was prepared in English, but since the study was also conducted in Turkey, the questionnaire was translated into Turkish and later back-translated into English (Ball, McCulloch, Frantz, Geringer, & Minor, 2002). The survey instrument was pretested in both English and Turkish with respondents similar to the target respondents. These pretests provided useful input for improving the survey questions and for establishing face validity of the constructs (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2005). The survey also included demographic questions as such gender, age and student classification. The final survey was administered using convenience sampling to American and Turkish university/college students to represent Millennials, which is the focus of this study. International students from each country were excluded in order to include students

(millennials) only from the two countries of interest. This assured that the respondents represented their respective cultures. This process produced 462 usable surveys; 44% (203) were from the USA and 56% (259) were from Turkey. 52% of the respondents were female and 48% were male. The focus of our survey was to target millennials; the average age of respondents was 20 for America and 22 for Turkey.

Results

The first research objective (RO1) examined overall mean scores and scores for country and gender. Figure 1 shows that overall services perceived to be the most male-oriented were police (-.97) and politicians (-.68), whereas services perceived to be the most female-oriented were nurses (1.19) and flight attendants (1.08). The results in Figure 2 indicate that American millennials showed this same gender-stereotyping but were stronger in their perceptions. Turkish millennials' perceptions were slightly different. They perceived policemen (-.79) and real estate agents (-.56) to be the most male-oriented services but their perceptions were weaker than those shared by American millennials. Turkish millennials' perceptions of the most female-oriented services were also nurses and flight attendants, but their perceptions were of a lesser degree than that of American millennials.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Insert Figure 2 about here

Figure 3 shows that male and female millennials had the same perceptions regarding male- and female-oriented services as those observed for all millennials. They were different, however, in their views of gender neutral services as shown in Figure 3. The results for all respondents, as well as by country and by gender indicate an existence of service-gender stereotyping as such that most services are perceived as male-oriented or female-oriented, and very few as gender neutral.

Insert Figure 3 about here

The second research objective (RO2) examined two-way comparisons. The first comparison to be explored is shown in Figure 4. It compares American females to Turkish females and American males to Turkish males. Perception comparisons between American and Turkish females was not statistically significant for cell phone representatives and call center representatives ($p > .05$). All other comparisons were statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Insert Figure 4 about here

As shown in Figure 4, perception comparisons between American and Turkish males was not statistically significant for cell phone representatives, fast food servers, nurses, flight attendants, and nurses ($p > .05$). All other comparisons were statistically significant ($p < .05$).

The comparisons between American males and American females, shown in Figure 5, were only significant in a small number of the services ($p < .05$): coffee servers, cell phone representatives, flight attendants, and teachers. The comparisons of perceptions between Turkish females and Turkish males was statistically significant for professors, call center representatives, cell-phone representatives, flight attendants, lawyers, fast-food servers, coffee servers, and hotel receptionists ($p < .05$).

Insert Figure 5 about here

Discussion

These findings indicate the existence of service-gender stereotyping among millennials on an overall basis, as well as by cultures and gender. These results are consistent with prior research regarding the existence of service gender-orientation stereotyping (Pinar et al., 2016, 2013, 2009). However, these findings do not support the suggestion by recent research (Daukas, 2013; Dolloite 2016; Smith & Turner, 2015) that millennials accept and embrace the integration of demographic differences. Despite recent globalization and the growth of social media to bring cultures closer, service-gender stereotyping still exists even among millennials, the most globally diverse generation.

While there are similar perceptions of service-gender stereotyping shown in Figure 4, there are some differences in the level or direction of perceptions. The comparisons of service-gender stereotyping in Figure 5 found that both genders in both countries have similar patterns, with some exceptions. This indicates that service-gender stereotyping exists between both genders regardless of the cultural differences and attitudes (Aycan, 2004; Sanal, 2006). These findings are similar to those of Pinar et al. (2009) and Pinar et al. (2016).

The findings of this study are also consistent with the predictions of the SAP, SIT, and SCT that while services with masculine perception are perceived as male-oriented, the services with feminine perception are perceived as female-oriented. These results suggest that, with some

exceptions, there seems to be general patterns of service-gender stereotyping regardless of gender and/or culture. These findings could have some managerial implications for service companies domestically and globally. For example, given the perception of service-gender stereotyping, service companies may try to recruit to match service perception with personnel gender for service quality, as well as matching customer expectations. .

While this exploratory study provides some insights about service-gender stereotyping among millennials, the results must be viewed in the context of limitations. One limitation is sample size; a larger sample could improve the generalizability of findings. The second limitation is that the study was conducted in two countries. Including millennials from more countries could provide different perspectives in the global marketplace. The final limitation is that the study did not examine the effects of service-gender stereotyping on service quality. Future studies could examine the service-gender stereotyping from service-quality perspectives.

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Figure 1: Mean Scores for All Respondents

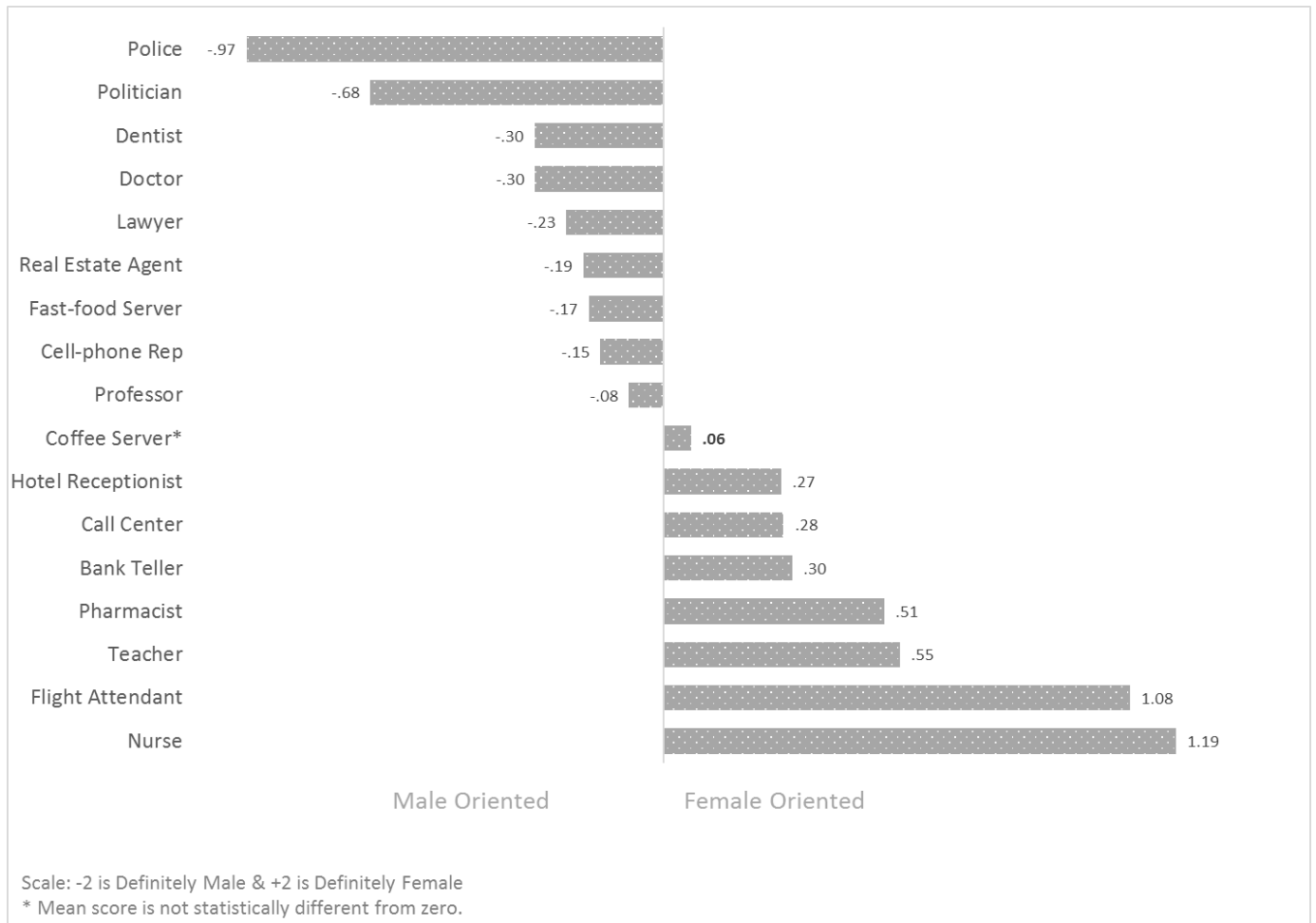


Figure 2: Mean Scores by Country

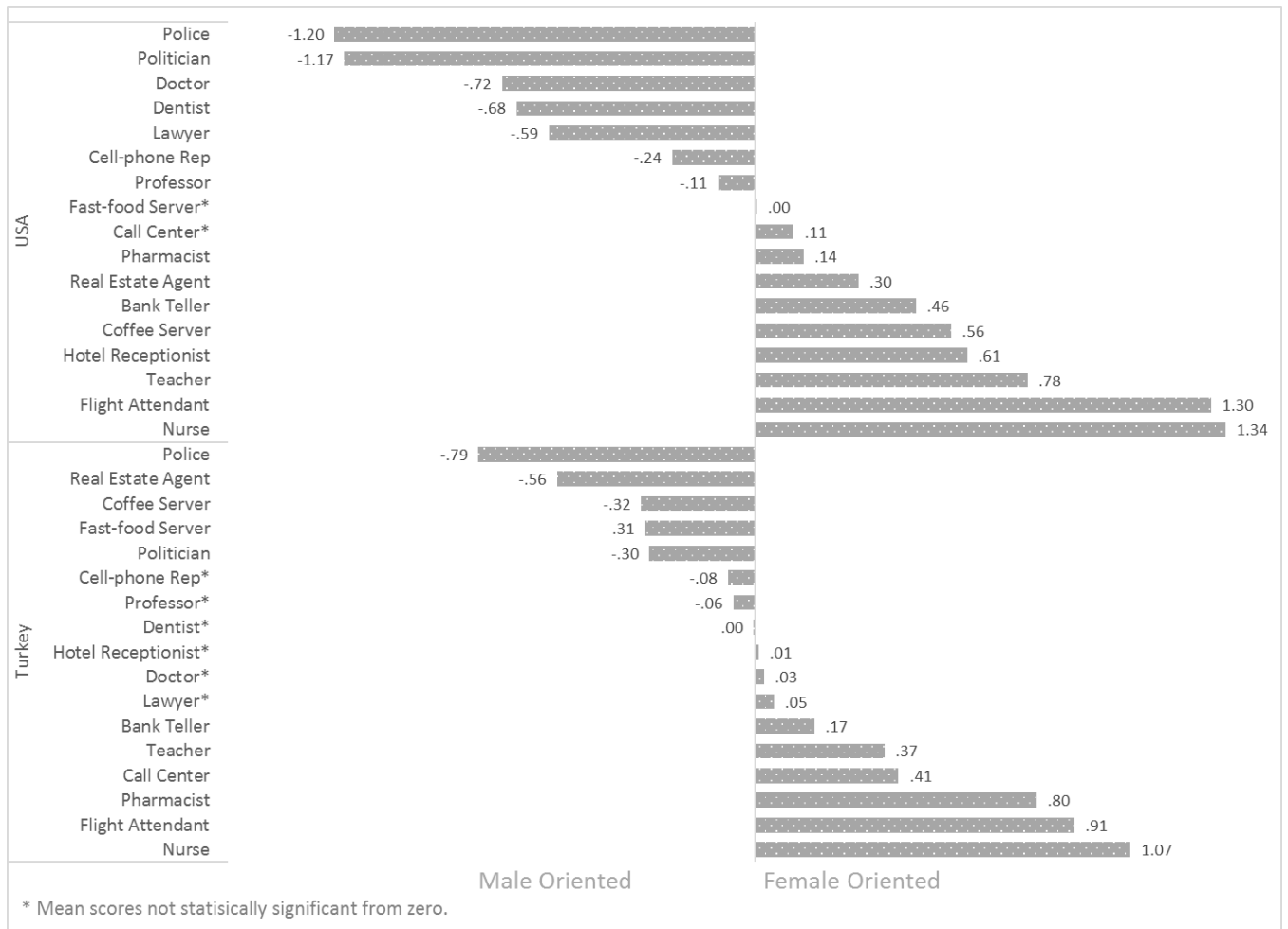


Figure 3: Mean Scores by Gender

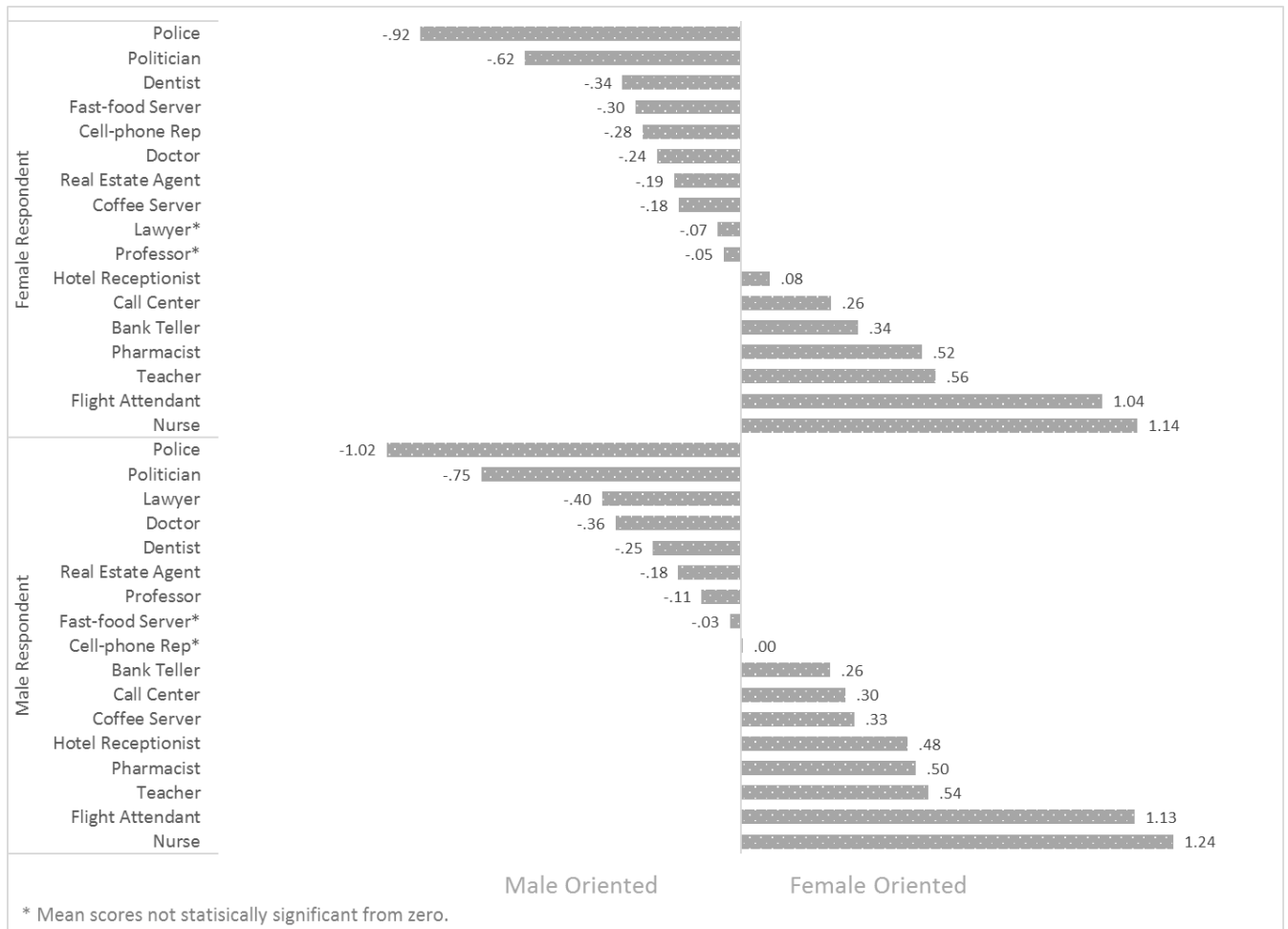


Figure 4: Mean Score Comparison between Countries by Gender, sorted by American Male

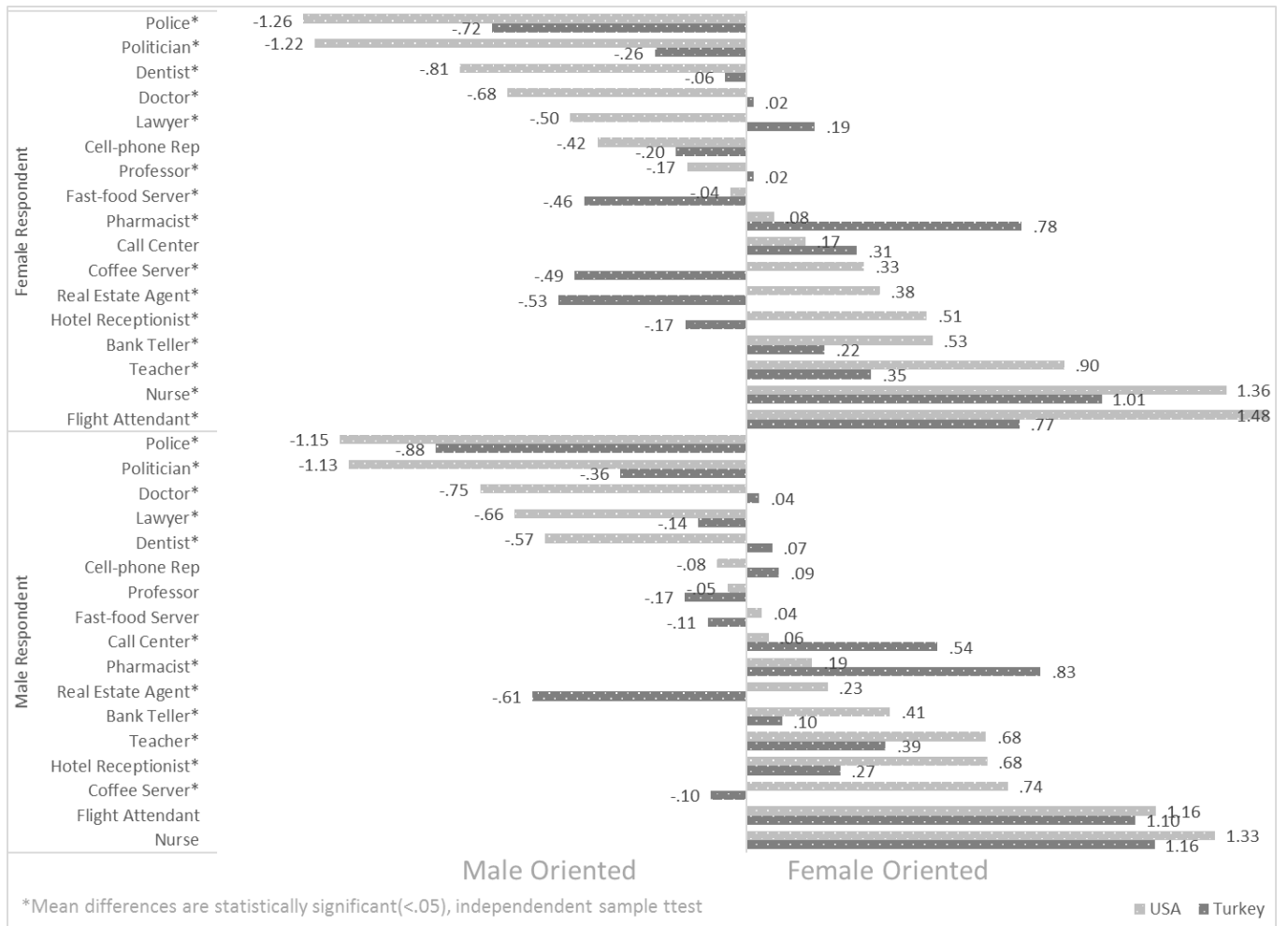


Figure 5: Mean Score Comparison between Genders by Country

