

Factors Affecting the Specialty Choice Among Medical Students of Saudi Arabia; Exploring the Facts

Sr. #	Coding 1	Coding 2	Subtheme & relevant Codes	Theme	Quotes	
1	working with kids	Gender preference	Perception of specialty characteristics ➤ Working hours ➤ Working environment ➤ Wider scope ➤ Patient interaction ➤ Practical application of knowledge ➤ Specialty demand ➤ Acceptance rate in residency program	Recognizing the determinant for specialty choice	<i>I enjoy it the most and I found myself in this specialty by heart.</i>	
2	Surgical specialties	Preference based on specialty type				<i>It's very interesting, and clinical practice is very focused in ObGy, unlike Internal Medicine which is very vast.</i>
3	Making kids more confident	Lifestyle choice				<i>I have passion for ophthalmology and it allows balance between work life and family life.</i>
4	Fun	Esthetics				<i>I liked it because children are cute and helping them will change not only their lives but also their families.</i>
5	Less chance of burn out	Income	Expected future expectations			<i>I would prefer a specialty with less stress, more time off and good income, I guess 😊 (with a wink)</i>
6	Peaceful specialty	Proficiency	➤ Income ➤ Lifestyle ➤ Working hours ➤ Quality of life ➤ Sense of achievement			
7	Suits the lifestyle I aspire	Working hours	Personal characteristics ➤ Passion ➤ Proficiency ➤ Values/ Altruism ➤ Personal life events (Influence)			

					<i>I always wanted to help as many people as possible suffering from various conditions and belonging to wide age group. I believe Internal Medicine serves that purpose. As it makes up the core of Medicine.</i> <i>I would prefer pathology as it has minimal to no on-calls and patient interactions</i> <i>It fits me. I've always been passionate about women's health and issues and I feel like I have a skill in communicating and understanding women on a deeper level. It's the only specialty where you say "congratulations" multiple times a day, which I think is very special.</i>
--	--	--	--	--	--

					<i>I like working with my own hands</i>
8	Children	Choice range	Financial benefits and career choice ➤ No role ➤ Financial independence ➤ Quality of life	Impact of financial benefits on specialty choice	<i>It's well known that obgyn earns a good living, which of course everyone wants. But I would say that my main motivation is that I don't see myself doing something else. The earnings are definitely a welcomed pro.</i> <i>Financial benefit is of no importance in my opinion.</i> <i>Humanity comes first.</i> <i>Yes, I do think so. Money factor can't be ignored.</i> <i>Yes of course, I want to be financially independent in the future.</i>
9	To help people in their suffering	Wider scope	Right time to choose ➤ Post internship ➤ Clinical years ➤ As early as possible ➤ Never too late	Right time for specialty choice	
10	Wide age group	Less Medication required	Role of gender ➤ Unfortunate fact ➤ Stereotype and Cultural expectations ➤ Gender specific specialties ➤ Lack of representation		
11	Interested in skin, makeup and beauty	Personal experience	Impact of COVID ➤ Impact on learning ➤ Impact on specialty choice		
12	Help others to show their best version	Minimal patient exposure	Associated factors ➤ Positive role modeling of teachers ➤ Working conditions		
13	Good timing	Less working hours		Gender specificity/stereotype	

			(hours & environment) ➤ Finances ➤ Specialty demand ➤ Acceptance rate in residency programs ➤ Family ➤ Gender specificity		
14	Good pay	Help to the patients			
15	Good lifestyle	Practical application of the knowledge			
16	I found myself good at it	Saving human life		Impact of COVID on specialty choice	For specialty choice; As early as possible as it will help you in doing research and taking summer electives in that department, but again you never know 🤷 (shrugging of shoulders). It's never too late!
17	Vast number of possible sub-specialties	Passion		Concomitant motivational factors	
18	IM, the door never closed	Confidence			
		Focused			
19	Least number of medications	Work-life balance			
20	My uncle passed away due to MI	Personal liking			
21	No patient encounter	Better outcome			Gender has no role in specialty choice.
22	Minimal calls	Stress coping			

23	Help kids living healthy life	Quality of life			<i>yes, somehow its always in the back of your mind.</i> <i>Maybe but for me it was more about my preference.</i> <i>Not really. It's more about what lifestyle you'd prefer. Some male doctors prefer family medicine while some female doctors prefer neurosurgery</i> <i>Yes, to be realistic as a female it is important to put in mind the lifestyle that comes with each career and how this might affect her ability to be a mother. But still depends on personal choice.</i> <i>Personally, I think, Gender does have a role in our career choice but not very significant.</i> <i>Honestly and unfortunately yes.</i>
----	-------------------------------	-----------------	--	--	---

					<i>I want to say no, but I clearly know I would be lying if I said that. For example, highly demanding specialties like surgery and orthopedics can be quite tough on females rather than male, however, that doesn't in any way mean that they shouldn't choose that. If that's what they're passionate about, then go for it!</i> <i>No and Yes, it's in the middle. For certain females it's doesn't make a difference and they end up choosing heavier professions like surgery where you end up having crazy night shift lots of emergency cases and no family life but to others they want a balance with work and family they</i>
--	--	--	--	--	--

					<i>end up choosing lighter professions like derma or family medicine or radiology etc.</i> <i>Yes, it does. I wouldn't choose a very demanding career with a poor work life balance which eventually I will have to give up to fulfill other aspects of life.</i> <i>To some extent, depending on culture and the individual's personal preferences. In our societies, where women are expected to take care of their families and household affairs, females may opt for specialties with better hours.</i>
24	Wide scope to understand, realize and imply knowledge.	Matches with interest			<i>COVID had made learning hard.</i> <i>COVID has made me clinically</i>

					<i>under-skilled due to lack of clinical exposure and practice</i> <i>COVID hasn't affected the choices for my specialty</i> <i>COVID has made me more introvert and I have social anxiety now so I prefer specialties that do not involve socializing.</i> <i>It didn't really affect it much.</i> <i>Actually, it has made me consider to be a Pulmonologist.</i> <i>Gave me more time to study it but less time to practice it</i>
25	Understanding more than memorizing	Passion for women health			<i>My medical school teachers were my role models in choosing my specialty.</i>

					<i>The fact that all the patients would be female, so I won't have to be in contact with strange men unnecessarily.</i> <i>Working hours and working environment are important for me.</i> <i>I want a relaxed lifestyle.</i>
26	Save life	Working environment			
27	Help patients	Sense of achievement			
28	Enjoy treating patients				
29	I found me self in this specialty				
30	Focused clinical practice				
31	Balance between work life and family life				
32	Children are cute!				
33	Helping children will change their and their family's lives				
34	Less stress				
35	Good income				
36	It matches with my interests in future				
37	Passionate about women's health and issues				

38	The lifestyle and is exactly the environment I thrive for				
39	Only specialty where you say “congratulations” multiple times a day				
40	Earning is an important factor	Earning an important factor			
41	Do not feel like	Not a decisive factor			
42	Good standard life with decent earning	Required for good standard life			
43	Off course	Definitely			
44	Not sure	Indecisive			
45	Good earning is required for being independent	Financial independence			
46	Yes, Of course!	Of course!			
47	After completing my internship year	Internship			
48	As early as possible	As early as possible			
49	Clinical years	Clinical years			
50	Doesn’t matter	No specific time			
51	Enough exposure required	Never too late			
52	Before stepping into residency				
53	Different time for different people				
54	Might affect her ability to be a good mother	Gender specificity			
55	Gender does have a role but not significant	Insignificantly significant			
56	Unfortunately, yes	Unfortunate fact			

57	Demanding specialties are not for females	Demanding specialties			
58	Male dominating specialties	Gender specific specialties			
59	Tough specialties				
60	Night shifts affect family life	Impact on family life			
61	Difficulties to maintain work-life balance	Compromised work-life balance			
62	Will not choose highly demanding specialties as a female	Impact of highly demanding careers			
63	Personal choice of lifestyle	Personal preference			
64	Depends of culture	Cultural pressures/impact			
65	Female giving up their careers				
66	More about what lifestyle you'd prefer	Lifestyle preference			
67	Comfort of working in women community	Comfort			
68	Individual choice	Passion			
69	Shift to online studies	Online learning			
70	Didn't know how to study online	Compromises of online learning			
71	Isolation				
72	Home schooling				
73	social disconnect				
74	Poor social interaction				
75	Compromised student patient interaction				

76	Learning by more than one way	Multimodal learning			
77	Relaxed learning				
78	Innovative learning				
79	Exciting!!	Pandemic management learning			
80	Poor focus control	Challenge management			
81	Compromised hospital/clinical training				
82	Underkilled				
83	Stressful				
84	Compromised attention				
85	Lack of self confidence				
86	Uncertainty				
87	Less time in hospitals				
88	Affected my understanding about many diseases	Compromised understanding about diseases			
89	COVID positively affected me rather than negatively	Positive impact of COVID			
90	Not capable of performing any of the physical exams	Compromised physical examination practice			
91	Didn't see surgeries	Compromised surgical experience			
92	Increased the motivation to peruse challenging fields.	Motivational to counter challenges			

93	Limited my knowledge for some specialties	Limited exposure to different specialties			
94	COVID motivated me to learn more	Motivational			
95	No effect on my specialty choice	No Impact			
96	Made me appreciate Internal Medicine further as a specialty	Appreciation for specialty choice			
97	Didn't affect in any way				
98	Social isolation lead to choose the specialty with no communication or interaction with people				
99	Doctors who taught us were the motivational factor	Positive role modeling of teachers			
100	working hours	Acceptance rate in residency program			
101	Flexible timing	Family			
102	earning	Specialty demand			
103	Acceptance rate in residency program				
104	Family				
105	Personality				
106	Lifestyle				
107	Working hours				
108	Passion				
109	Specialty demand				
110	Personal experience				
111	Gender specificity				

112	Career opportunities				
113	working environment				

1. 1st coding cycle: 113 codes
2. 2nd coding cycle: 70 codes
3. Subthemes: 8
4. Themes 6