Letter to Editor

Empowering Children's Rehabilitation: Unleashing the Expertise of the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences

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In Iran, rehabilitation for children often lacks a specialized curriculum and is typically offered only as part of a master's or specialized doctoral program. Unfortunately, this field has no officially approved training courses or educational frameworks. As a result, individuals who choose to pursue this specialization often do so out of personal interest, and their expertise tends to be self-taught. Currently, child rehabilitation primarily follows traditional methods and is limited to a few weekly sessions at rehabilitation centers. However, there is an opportunity to improve both the cost-effectiveness and rehabilitation outcomes. Parents and caregivers can actively participate in their child's rehabilitation by leveraging family-oriented treatment methods and home-based care. Remote monitoring by experts can further enhance this approach. We propose a shift toward 'remote rehabilitation' for children. Additionally, we must address the unique challenges faced by children with chronic illnesses and newborns hospitalized in intensive care units. These populations have emerged due to advances in medical care, leading to increased survival rates. Unfortunately, once these children leave the hospital, there is often inadequate supervision of their ongoing rehabilitation and management of complications. Mental health support for families is also crucial during this process. To bridge these gaps, we need a comprehensive plan that ensures children can regain their independence and resume community activities, with strong family support.

In the realm of strategic planning, research has highlighted that central concepts, such as sustainable development, internationalization, and diversity, can serve as focal points for universities aiming to become scientific hubs. Additionally, annual evaluations of strategic planning and a thorough review of planning outputs play pivotal roles. Effective evaluation contributes to sustainability and propels universities toward scientific prominence. While numerous studies have explored strategic planning, less emphasis has been placed on employing research and development methods to design strategic plans that establish scientific authority. Instead, much of the existing work relies on quantitative and qualitative assessments, often involving expert interviews. Within the Ministry of Health, and Medical Education, supporting existing scientific hubs and creating new ones to address national challenges are priorities. Enhancing the position and role of these hubs in the country's scientific and technological development involves revising identification methods and establishing criteria for evaluating their performance. A case in point is the University

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of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences (USWR) and the Pediatric Neurorehabilitation Research Center. These institutions boast scientific expertise, specialized capacities, expert faculty, and unique facilities. Their track record includes active participation in national and regional projects and the production of evidence-based scientific standards, protocols, and guidelines. Recognized by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, the USWR has a distinguished mission area: Children's rehabilitation authority. As a recommendation, the university should develop its inaugural strategic plan for advancing the scientific foundation of children's rehabilitation [1-3].

This study aimed to formulate a comprehensive five-year strategic plan for a scientific hub, focusing on children's rehabilitation, with input from key national-level stakeholders. In this article, we consider the high prevalence of developmental disorders and the critical need for timely rehabilitation in children. Using the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis technique, we assessed the perspectives of the participants. Finally, we propose strategies to leverage strengths and opportunities (SO) while addressing weaknesses and threats to establish the scientific authority of children's rehabilitation within the USWR [4-7].

The results of the SWOT analysis, considering both internal and external factors, reveal the following key points regarding the authority of children's rehabilitation at the USWR:

1) Internal factors: The weighted score of 2.60 (above the cutoff point of 2.5) indicates that internal factors align well with the university's children's rehabilitation goals. Strategies should focus on leveraging strengths and capitalizing on opportunities (strength and opportunity [SO] strategies); 2) External factors: The weighted score of 2.67 suggests that the university effectively utilizes available opportunities to mitigate threats. These threats are not considered significant risks to the authority of children's rehabilitation; 3) Strategic options: Based on the weight assigned to each factor, the most critical options for consideration are:

A) The most significant strengths lie in the presence of educational programs related to pediatric rehabilitation, active research conducted at the Pediatric Neurorehabilitation Research Center, and collaborative efforts at the national level. The university benefits from extensive research on children's rehabilitation due to the involvement of senior and doctoral students in educational groups. Additionally, the presence of internationally recognized professors and experts enhances our understanding of emerging fields in pediatric rehabilitation; B) The most significant weaknesses include challenges in attracting academic staff for the scientific aspect of children's rehabilitation, insufficient allocation of financial resources to establish a dedicated children's rehabilitation center, limitations in forming scientific collaborations with researchers external to the university, and the absence of growth-oriented technology centers and knowledge-based companies in the field of pediatric rehabilitation. Additionally, universities may face delays in transitioning to third and fourth-generation institutions; C) The most significant threats include the challenge of establishing communication with scientific research centers abroad, the absence of well-defined national policies for policymaking and budget allocation in the field of children's rehabilitation, and limited technological progress in children's rehabilitation services. However, the university's potential is evident, as the resulting score of 2.67 suggests that it could become a prominent reference center for children's rehabilitation in the region if effectively managed. 4) SWOT matrix: Following the university's strategy evaluation and selection model, the strategic area of SO is identified. This involves formulating strategies that leverage strengths and capitalize on available opportunities. The recommended strategies for children's rehabilitation include:

(1) Establishing and developing a dedicated "Children's Rehabilitation Center," with targeted funding allocation; (2) Creating and enhancing the "Department of Children's Rehabilitation" as a distinct mission within the university; (3) Implementing an annual monitoring system to track progress in the strategic plan for children's rehabilitation.

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