Utilizing Multiple Rater Perspectives in Emotional Disturbance Evaluation

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EDDT™   PAR®

Abstract

Identifying students with emotional disturbance (ED) can be challenging. The Emotional Disturbance Decision Tree (EDDT) offers a comprehensive approach to gathering information from students, their parents, and their teachers. Key interpretive steps include assessing validity of ratings, making normative comparisons, interpreting scale and cluster scores, interpreting profiles of scale elevations, interpreting ratings between multiple informants, and interpreting change between ratings over time.

ED and the EDDT

ED is characterized by emotional and behavioral problems that affect a child's performance in school.

The EDDT assists in the identification of children who qualify for the federal Special Education category of ED and gathers information across multiple informants:

- EDDT Teacher Form (EDDT or EDDT-TF; Euler, 2007)
- EDDT Parent Form (EDDT-PF; Euler, 2010)
- EDDT Self-Report Form (EDDT-SR; Euler, 2016)

IDEA criterion	EDDT scale/cluster
(i) The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics (A-E):	
Over a long period of time.	Potential Exclusionary Items
To a marked degree.	Level of Severity (SEVERITY) Cluster
Adversely affects a child's educational performance.	Educational Impact (IMPACT) Cluster
(A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.	Potential Exclusionary Items
(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory inter-personal relationships with peers and teachers.	Inability to Build or Maintain Relationships (REL) scale
(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.	Inappropriate Behaviors or Feelings (IBF) scale
(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.	Pervasive Mood/Depression (PM/DEP) scale
(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.	Physical Symptoms or Fears (FEARS) scale
(ii) The term includes schizophrenia.	Possible Psychosis/Schizophrenia (POSSIBLE PSYCHOSIS) Cluster
The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.	Social Maladjustment (SM) Cluster

Case Example Background

Jamal is a 9-year-old third grader with a diagnosis of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) exhibiting behavior problems, including being disruptive and aggressive with teachers and other students. Tier I academic interventions did not help Jamal, so school staff provided Tier II interventions, including a functional behavior assessment and a behavior intervention plan, but these had minimal impact. Believing that Jamal may have ED, the school psychologist administered the EDDT-TF to his teacher, the EDDT-PF to Jamal's mother, and the EDDT-SR to Jamal.

Steps to EDDT Interpretation

Step 1: Examine Validity
The EDDT validity scale scores for Jamal were within the Acceptable range for each rater, suggesting the likelihood of valid profiles.

Step 2a: Interpret Scores Relative to Normative Expectations
The EDDT scale scores indicated the presence of ED in addition to meaningful social maladjustment (SM).

This evidence of comorbidity was very important as Jamal's severe externalizing behavior had caused many staff to see him only as a conduct-disordered, socially maladjusted child, rather than a child with ED. In reviewing the ADHD Cluster, it seems a diagnosis of ADHD for Jamal is also likely.
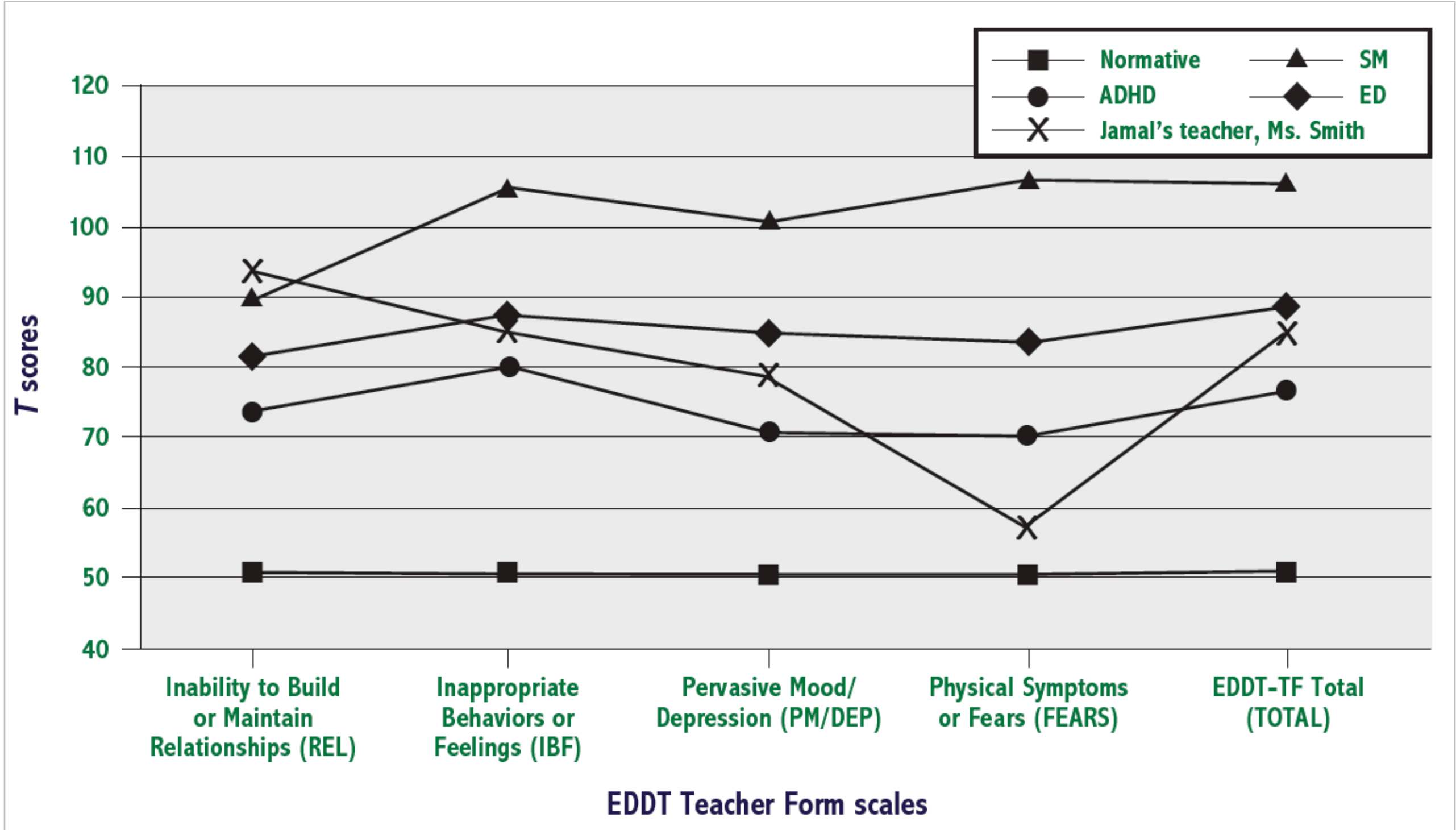
Step 2b: Compare Base Rates for Various Clinical Groups
Scores in Jamal's range on the EDDT-TF are more common in children with ADHD, SM, and ED, rather than in typically developing (TD) children.
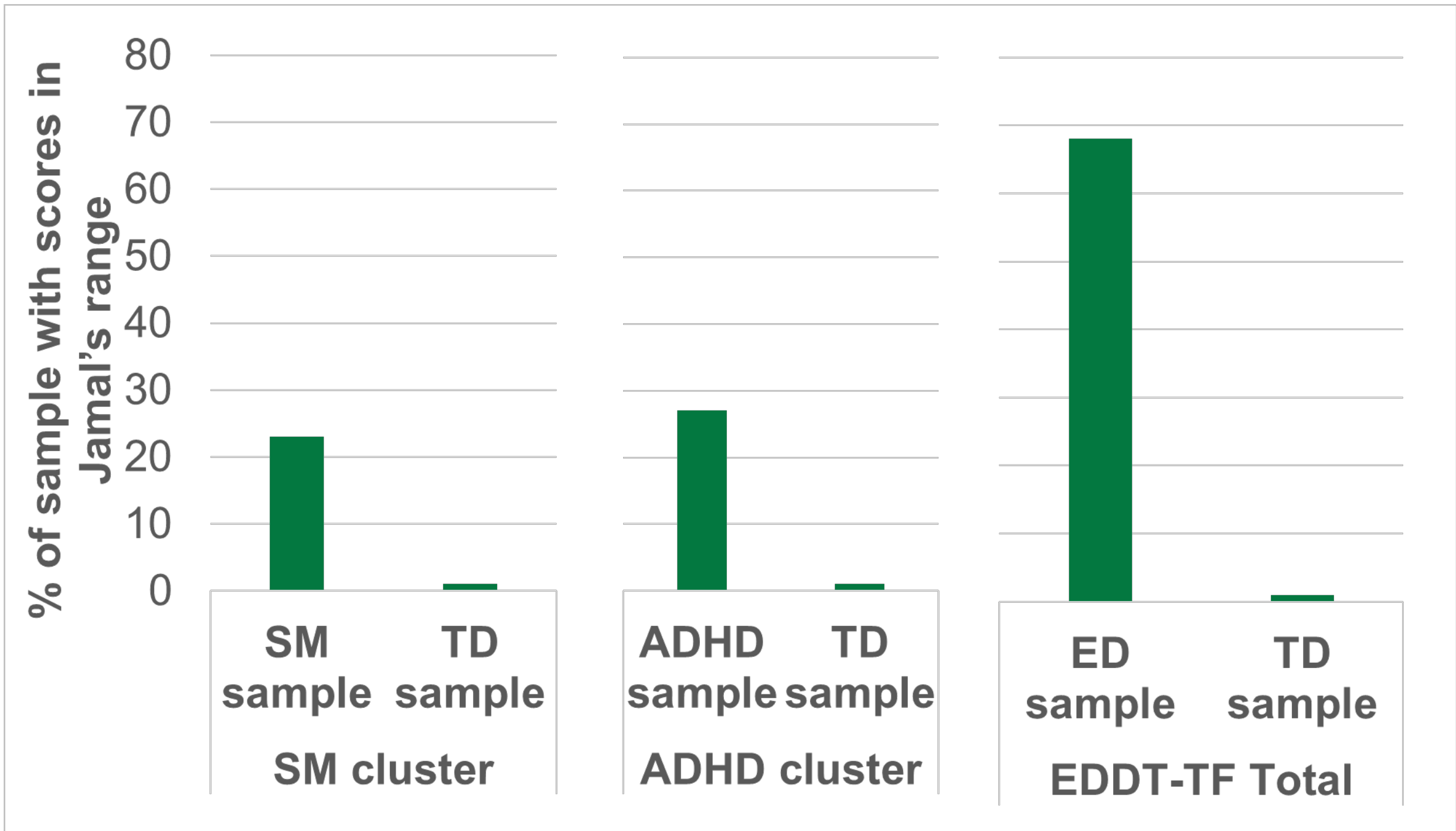
Step 3: Interpret Within-Test Score Profile
Jamal's EDDT-TF scale scores are most similar to those of children diagnosed with ED, with the highest elevation on the REL scale.

Step 4: Interpret Ratings Between Informants
The largest and most uncommon score discrepancies were found between Jamal and his teacher.

There are several reasons why this may be. Teachers often rate students as having more problems than parents or students do across diagnostic groups (ADHD, SM, ED; Euler, 2016). In addition, Jamal may be underreporting or unaware of his symptoms.

Multi-Rater Summary Form
Bryan L. Euler, PhD

Name: Jamal   ID#: ____
Gender: ☑M ☐F   Age: 9   Grade: 3rd
Parent's name: Tiffany   Teacher's name: Ms. Smith

Part 1: Multi-Rater Qualitative Overview. The table below is intended to help users integrate qualitative data across multiple raters. First, record the rater's name. Next, circle the appropriate qualitative label (refer to the Score Summary Booklet). Visually inspect patterns of consistencies and discrepancies across raters.

EDDT Multi-Rater Overview Table																				
	Ms. Smith (teacher)					Tiffany (mother)					Jamal									
	Rater					Rater					Rater					Rater				
Scale	Qualitative label					Qualitative label					Qualitative label					Qualitative label				
REL	N	MR	M	H	**V**	N	MR	**M**	H	V	N	**MR**	M	H	V	N	MR	M	H	V
IBF	N	MR	M	H	**V**	N	MR	**M**	H	V	N	**MR**	M	H	V	N	MR	M	H	V
PM/DEP	N	MR	M	**H**	V	N	**MR**	M	H	V	N	MR	**M**	H	V	N	MR	M	H	V
FEARS	N	MR	**M**	H	V	N	**MR**	M	H	V	**N**	MR	M	H	V	N	MR	M	H	V
TOTAL	N	MR	M	H	**V**	N	**MR**	M	H	V	N	MR	**M**	H	V	N	MR	M	H	V

Note. REL = Inability to Build or Maintain Relationships; N = Normal; MR = Mild At Risk; M = Moderate Clinical; H = High Clinical; V = Very High Clinical; IBF = Inappropriate Behaviors or Feelings; PM/DEP = Pervasive Mood/Depression; FEARS = Physical Symptoms or Fears; TOTAL = EDDT Total Score.

Part 2: Multi-Rater Score Discrepancies. Record the *T* scores for the selected raters. Calculate the absolute difference (Abs. Diff.) between the scores. Refer to Appendix F in the EDDT-SR Professional Manual to compute the percentage of *T*-score differences between various pairs of raters.

Discrepancy Table

Scale	Ms. Smith Rater 1	Tiffany Rater 2	Abs. Diff.	%
REL	94	66	28	7
IBF	85	66	19	23
PM/DEP	79	59	20	17
FEARS	57	57	0	45
TOTAL	85	63	22	16

Discrepancy Table

Scale	Tiffany Rater 1	Jamal Rater 2	Abs. Diff.	%
REL	66	55	11	7
IBF	66	57	9	76
PM/DEP	59	64	5	72
FEARS	57	49	8	72
TOTAL	63	57	7	77

Discrepancy Table

Scale	Ms. Smith Rater 1	Jamal Rater 2	Abs. Diff.	%
REL	94	55	39	0
IBF	85	57	28	2
PM/DEP	79	64	15	8
FEARS	57	49	8	62
TOTAL	85	57	28	0

Discrepancy Table

Scale	Rater 1	Rater 2	Abs. Diff.	%
REL				
IBF				
PM/DEP				
FEARS				
TOTAL				

Recommendations for Jamal
Jamal likely has ED as well as ADHD and SM. He is placed in a self-contained ED classroom with enhanced supports for his ADHD. He also begins receiving school social work services focused on relationship-building skills and improving coping skills for dealing with frustration, anger, and impulsivity.

Step 5: Interpret Between-Test Change
After Jamal spent several months in the ED classroom, Jamal, his mother, and his teacher took the EDDT again. Significant improvements were noted across most scales, indicating that his inclusion in the ED classroom and skill-building sessions were improving his behavior across a variety of domains.