

Client Engagement and Intensity of Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment



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Study Aim

Previous research has documented that treatment engagement (i.e., satisfaction, rapport, participation, peer and social support) is associated with positive outcomes. To fully engage in the treatment process, participation (in terms of contact and attendance) is imperative. Contact is greater in intensive programs, where clients are required to participate in more sessions (Knight et al., 2008). Engagement, therefore, should be higher in intensive programs. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between intensity of outpatient treatment and client engagement. Not only is it expected that client participation will be higher in intensive programs, but rapport with counselors and support from peers should also be higher because of greater contact with counselors and fellow clients. Support from individuals outside treatment is not expected to differ between intensive and regular clients. Client tenure is also expected to impact client engagement, especially in regard to counselor rapport.

Research Questions

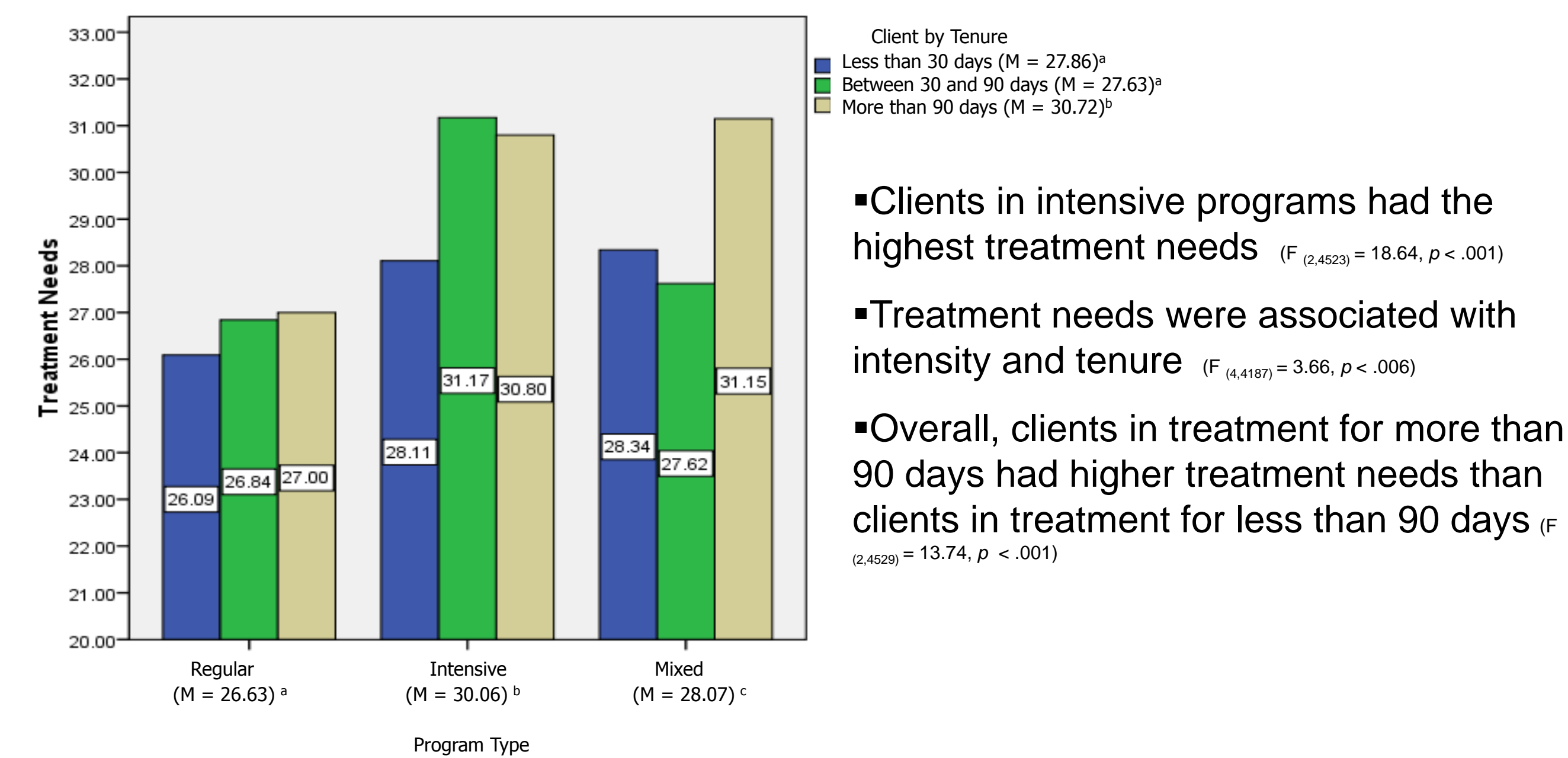
- Is program intensity related to client engagement?
- Is time in treatment associated with client engagement and counselor rapport?

Method

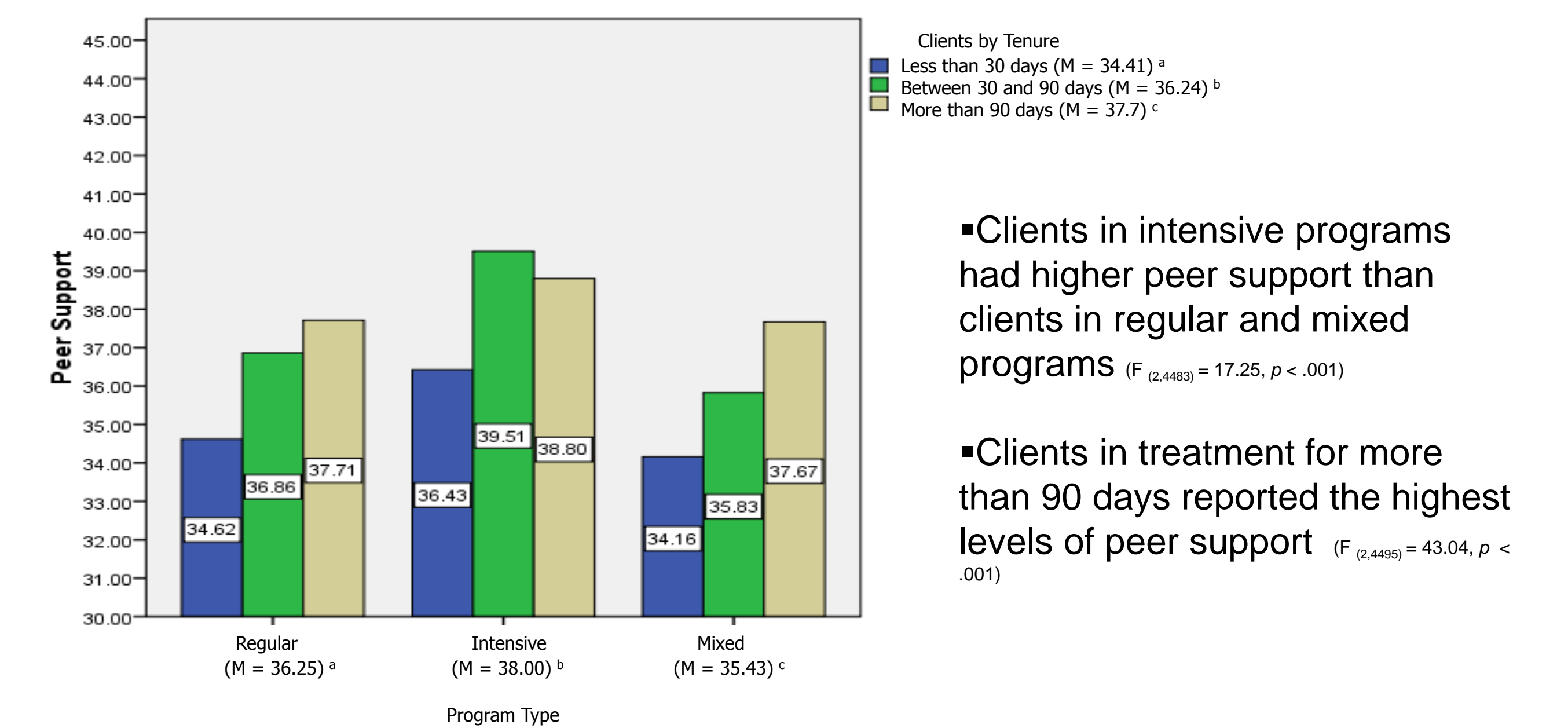
- Sample: 4580 clients (66% male, 66% White) from three types of outpatient programs:
 - Regular (20%; less than 6 hours of programming per week)
 - Intensive (5%; minimum of 2 hours of programming 3 days a week)
 - Mixed (74%; includes both regular and intensive programs)
- At the time of assessment, clients indicated how long they had been in treatment:
 - Less than 30 days (28%)
 - Between 30 and 90 days (39%)
 - More than 90 days (32%)
- Clients completed the Client Evaluation of Self and Treatment (CEST) which included the following client engagement measures:
 - Treatment Needs
 - Treatment Participation
 - Peer Support
 - Counseling Rapport
 - Treatment Satisfaction
- A series of two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs) procedures were used to examine differences in engagement due to variations in program intensity and client tenure.
- Post-hoc analyses were conducted using Tukey's HSD tests

Results

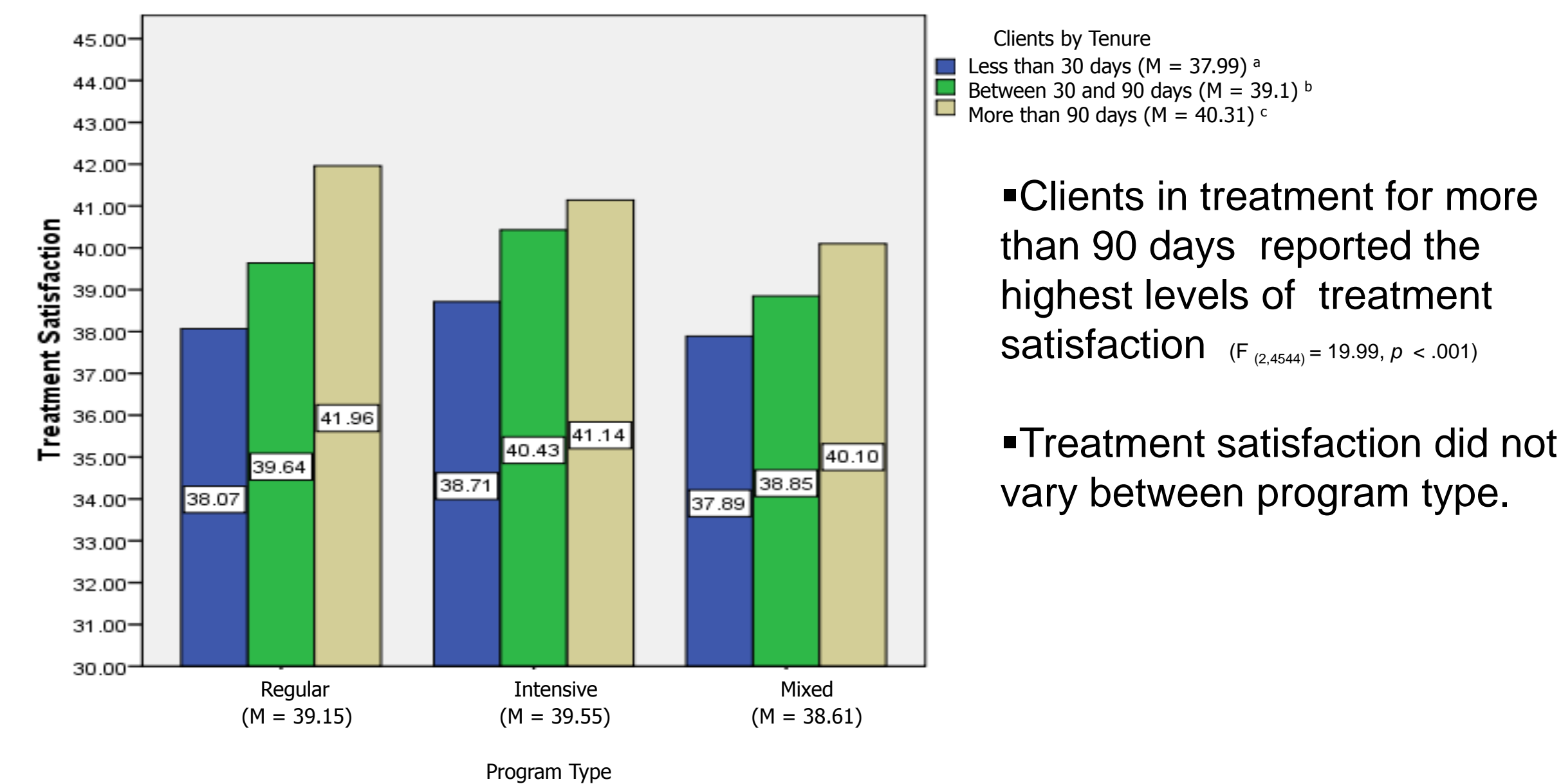
Treatment Needs



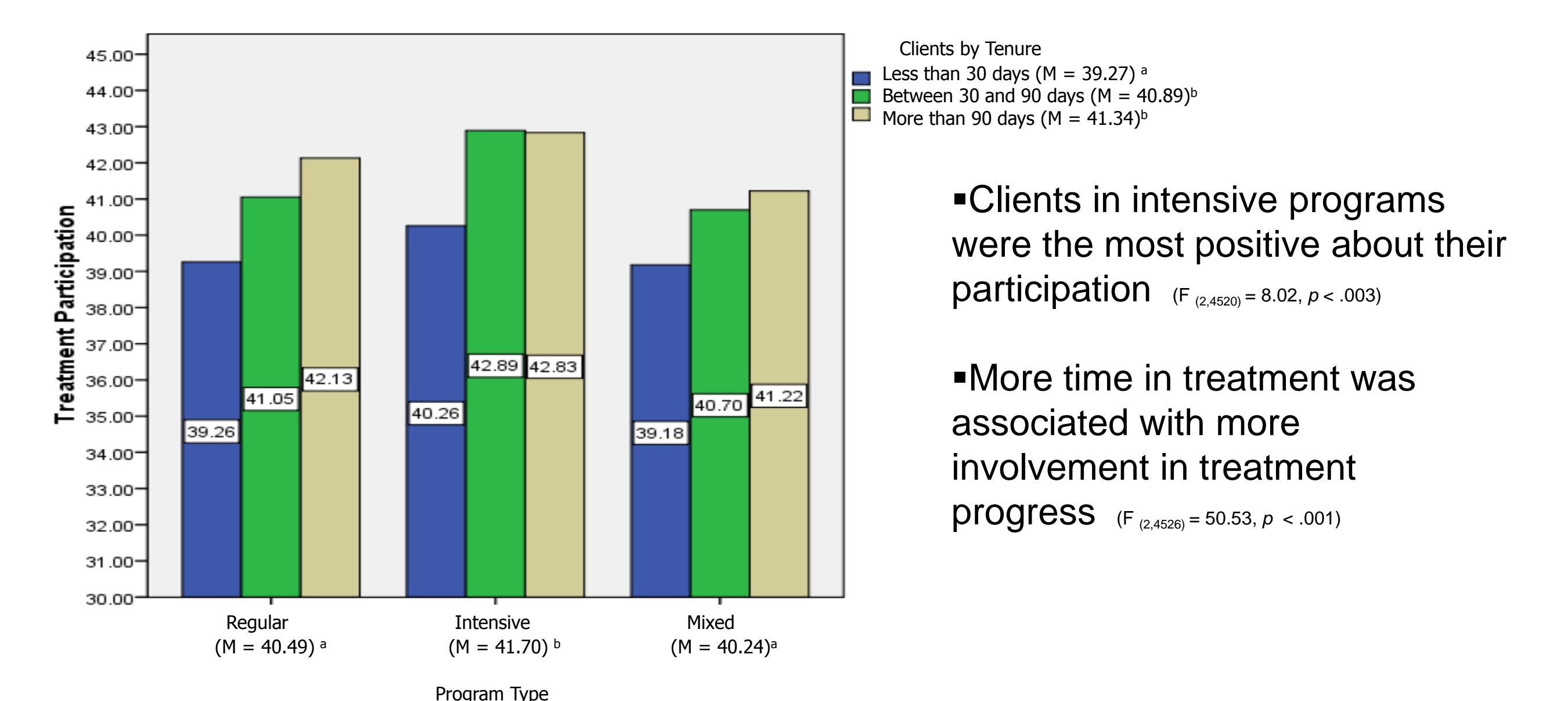
Peer Support



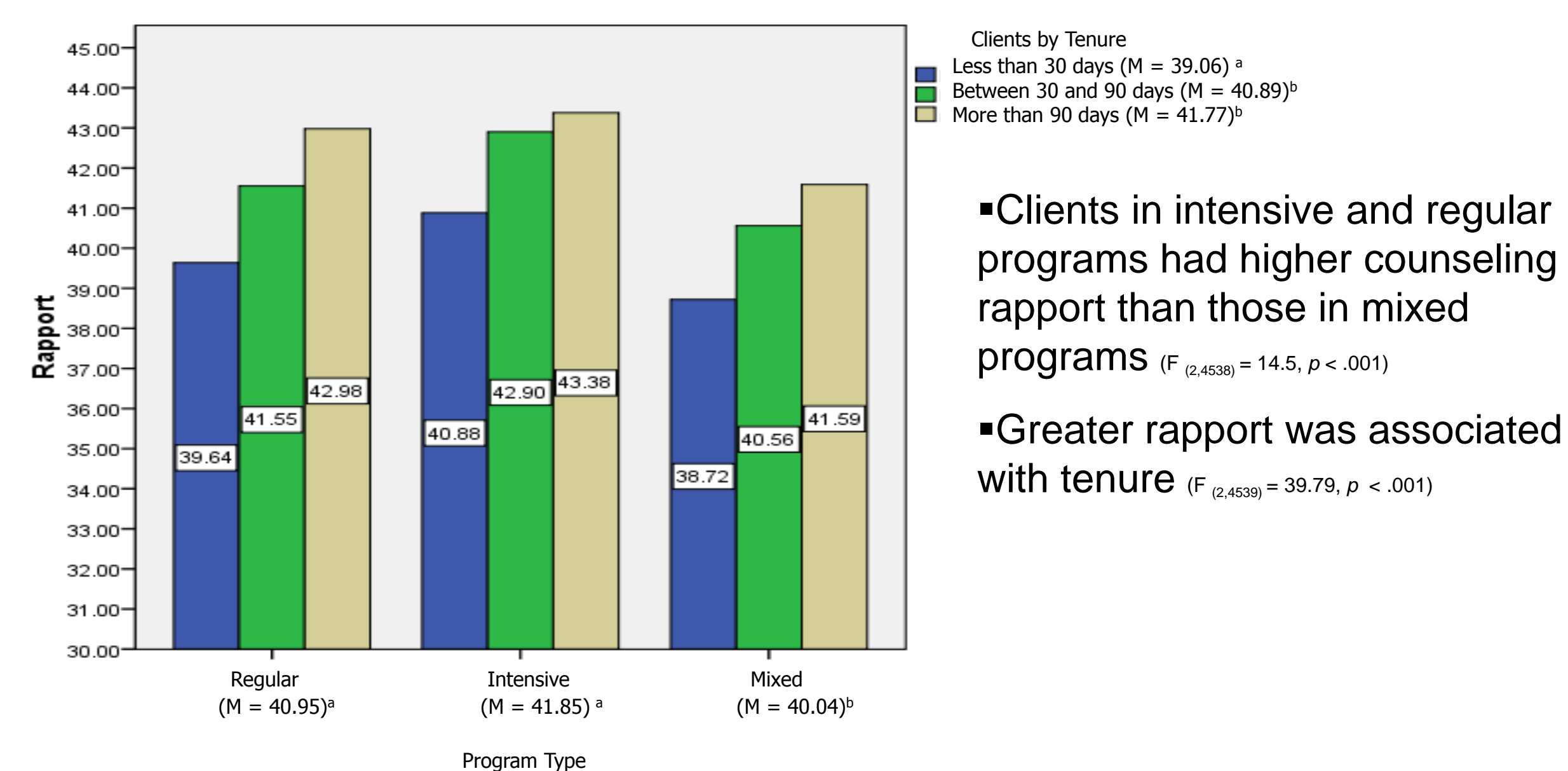
Treatment Satisfaction



Treatment Participation



Counseling Rapport



Applications

- Intensive programs are associated with positive client attitudes toward treatment participation and peer support than regular and mixed programs.
- Clients in treatment longer than 30 days report higher counseling rapport and participation than those new to treatment. More than 90 days tenure was related to greater satisfaction and perceptions of more support from other clients.
- Clients in intensive programs longer than 90 days reported higher treatment needs suggesting that staying in treatment longer may promote greater problem recognition.
- Treatment exposure and client retention are enhanced in intensive programs (Hoffman et al., 1994), and clients receive more contact with counselors and are required to participate in more sessions (Knight et al., 2008).