

No differences in recipients of care perceived quality of care between differentiated service delivery models and conventional care in South Africa

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BACKGROUND

- Like many countries across sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa has been scaling up differentiated service delivery (DSD) models to improve ART coverage
- DSD models aim to increase HIV treatment programs' responsiveness to the individual needs of recipients of care (RoC) to improve treatment outcomes and quality of life.
- Little is known about how patients' experiences of care in DSD models differ from conventional care.
- We assessed the experiences of RoC participating in DSD models compared to those remaining in conventional care.

METHODS

- We interviewed adult (≥18 years) RoC from May-Nov 2021 at 21 primary clinics in 4 districts of South Africa.
- Participants were selected consecutively at routine visits (stratified by DSD model) and surveyed about perceived quality of care (QoC), including provider attitudes, trust in the provider, and time spent with the provider. Mean scores were categorized as "low" QoC (score ≤3) or "high" QoC (score >3).
- We used logistic regression to assess differences and report adjusted odds ratios
- Participants were also asked how HIV services could be improved; responses were organized into themes.

RESULTS

- 867 RoC enrolled, as described in Table 1
- Perceived QoC was high among the study population, regardless of model (89.6%)
- Slightly more study participants in conventional care (11.5%) reported low QoC than did those using facility pick up points (10.2%) or external pick-up points (8.5%) (Figure 1)
- Almost 15% of those eligible but not enrolled in DSD models had low perceived QoC
- There were no significant differences in perceived QoC among those enrolled in DSD models compared to those in conventional care (Figure 2)
- RoC seeking outside healthcare and those who missed two or more visits in the year prior to study enrolment were also more likely to have low perceived QoC
- Suggested improvements in HIV service related to more staff, shorter waiting times, flexibility being able to pick up medication at different and convenient sites, and receiving more months of ART at each visit (Figure 3)

Table 1. Characteristics of study participants n=867

	Conventional care – not eligible for DSD model	Conventional care – eligible for DSD model	Facility pick-up point	External pick-up point	Total
Age in years					
Median (IQR)	39 (31-48)	37 (30-44)	40 (33-48)	40 (33-48)	39 (33-47)
16-24 (n,%)	21 (10)	16 (8)	20 (10)	7 (3)	64 (7)
25-35	58 (27)	72 (35)	42 (20)	52 (22)	224 (26)
35-49	86 (40)	92 (44)	100 (49)	127 (54)	405 (47)
50+	51 (24)	29 (14)	44 (21)	50 (21)	174 (20)
Sex					
Male	78 (36)	53 (25)	68 (33)	59 (25)	258 (30)
Female	138 (64)	156 (75)	138 (67)	177 (75)	609 (70)
Number of years on ART					
1-5 years	99 (46)	123 (59)	85 (41)	89 (38)	396 (46)
5-10 years	77 (36)	58 (28)	83 (40)	87 (37)	305 (35)
>=10 years	40 (19)	28 (13)	38 (18)	60 (25)	166 (19)

CONCLUSIONS

- "Satisfaction" may be a function of expectations—many RoC reported they were satisfied despite experiencing long waiting times and other characteristics associated with poorer quality care; we need to determine how to assess perceived quality of care when patients' expectations are very modest
- Routine satisfaction surveys should be integrated into quality assurance frameworks and routine service delivery. It is critical to also incorporate RoC feedback regarding experience and expectations in quality improvement initiatives

Recipients of care enrolled in DSD models in South Africa did not perceive differences in their quality of care compared to those in conventional care.

Figure 1. Perceived quality of care among study participants (n=867)

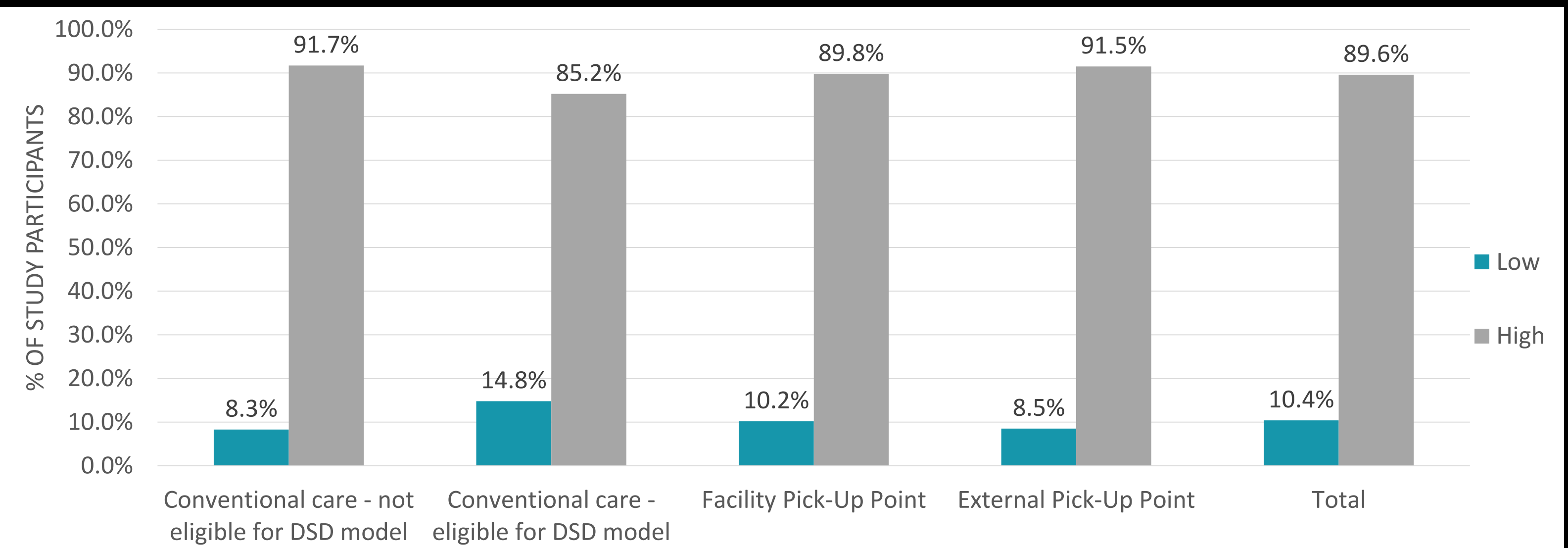


Figure 2. Crude and adjusted odds ratios of low perceived QoC for DSD model and conventional care study participants

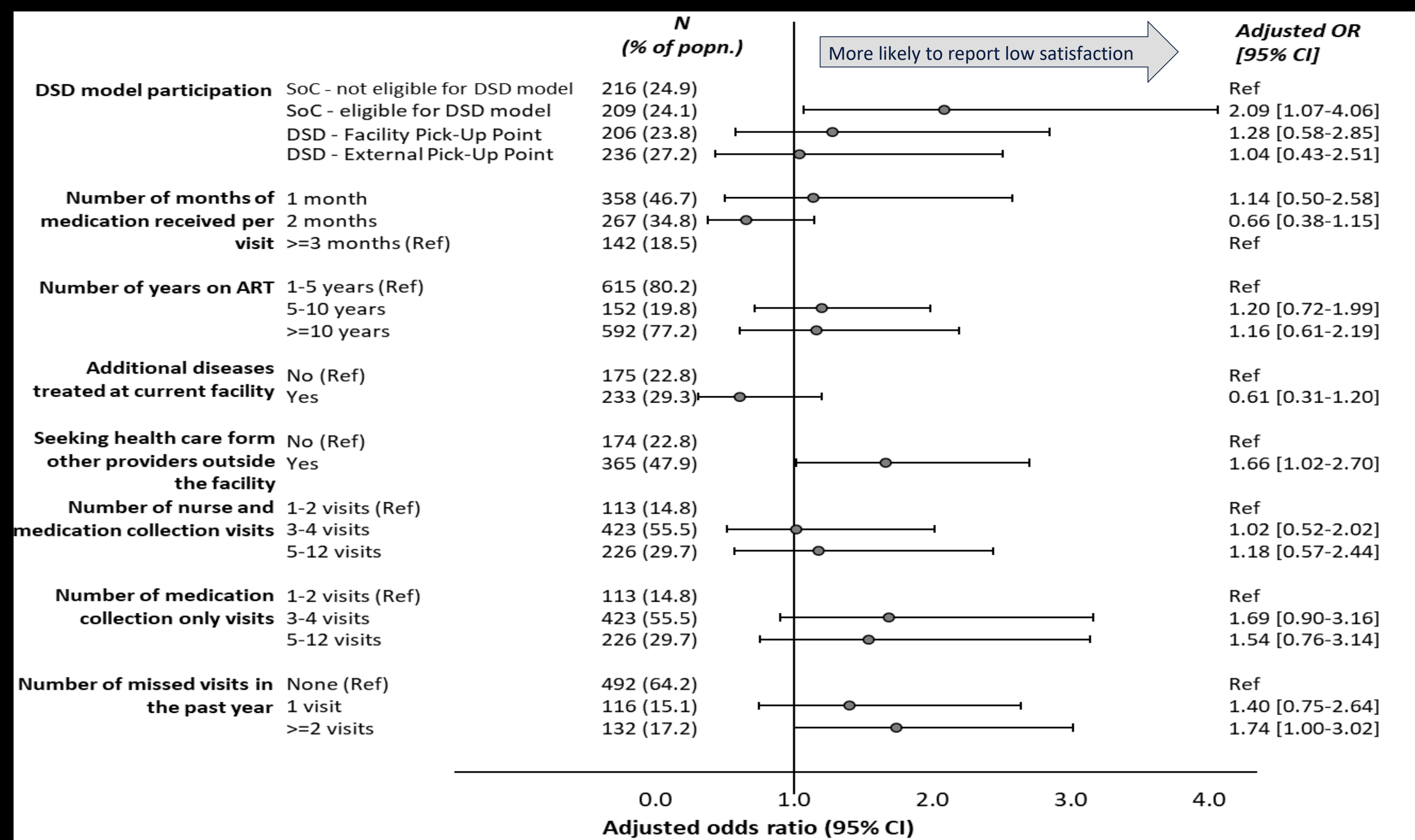


Figure 3. Suggested HIV service improvements

Conventional care:

- "We spend so much time waiting at the facility they seem to be short-staffed"
~ Male, 40 years old, Conventional care, not eligible for DSD model
- "The system they are using is in order I wouldn't like to see any improvement as they are trying their best I have been a patient since 2015 at this facility and they treat me very well every time."
~ Female, 36 years old, Conventional care, not eligible for DSD model
- "They must allow us when we send people to come and collect meds for us if we had missed appointments due to work commitment"
~ Female, 48 years old, Conventional care, not eligible for DSD model
- "Employ more male staff as they seem to be the ones with better attitude towards patients"
~ Female, 30 years old, Conventional care, eligible for DSD model
- "They should decant more patients. The facility sometimes has a lot of patients, and we get to wait long hours so it would really help if they decant more patients to external pick-up points for myself. I have been on medication for longer so I would appreciate it if they send me to external pick-up point."
~ Female, 29 years old, Conventional care, eligible for DSD model

DSD models:

- "The external PuP should be more flexible as in my vicinity we have just two pharmacies that offered care as an external PuP"
~ Female, 37 years old, DSD - External Pick-up Point
- "They should sort out their admin. Sometimes we used to arrive at the club and not get our treatment because our names are not on that list then we had to come here at the clinic. Pele box is perfect for me because I receive a notification when my treatment is ready."
~ Female, 35 years old, DSD - External Pick-up Point
- "Being able to renew script at the pharmacy where I collect medications."
~ Female, 41 years old, DSD - External Pick-up Point
- "More explanation or education for patients as I was referred to external pick point today and I am happy with collecting my medication at the facility"
~ Female, 55 years old, DSD - Facility Pick-up Point
- "Treatment must be delivered to homes and only come once to check bloods and checkups"
~ Female, 24 years old, DSD - Facility Pick-up Point