



2012-03-24

## Wanted "Dead or Alive": The Effects of Charismatic Leadership on Terrorist Organizations

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### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Harris, Cameron S.; Hawkins, Kirk; and Milton, Daniel, "Wanted "Dead or Alive": The Effects of Charismatic Leadership on Terrorist Organizations" (2012). *FHSS Mentored Research Conference*. 159.  
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# Wanted “Dead or Alive”

## The Effects of Charismatic Leadership on Terrorist Organizations

Cameron Harris

Mentors: Kirk Hawkins, Ph.D. and Daniel Milton, Ph.D. || Department of Political Science

### Introduction

What role does a charismatic leader play in a terrorist organization?

The study examined if a charismatic leader led to more killings perpetrated by the organization, and a longer life-span of the organization because of the leader’s influence.

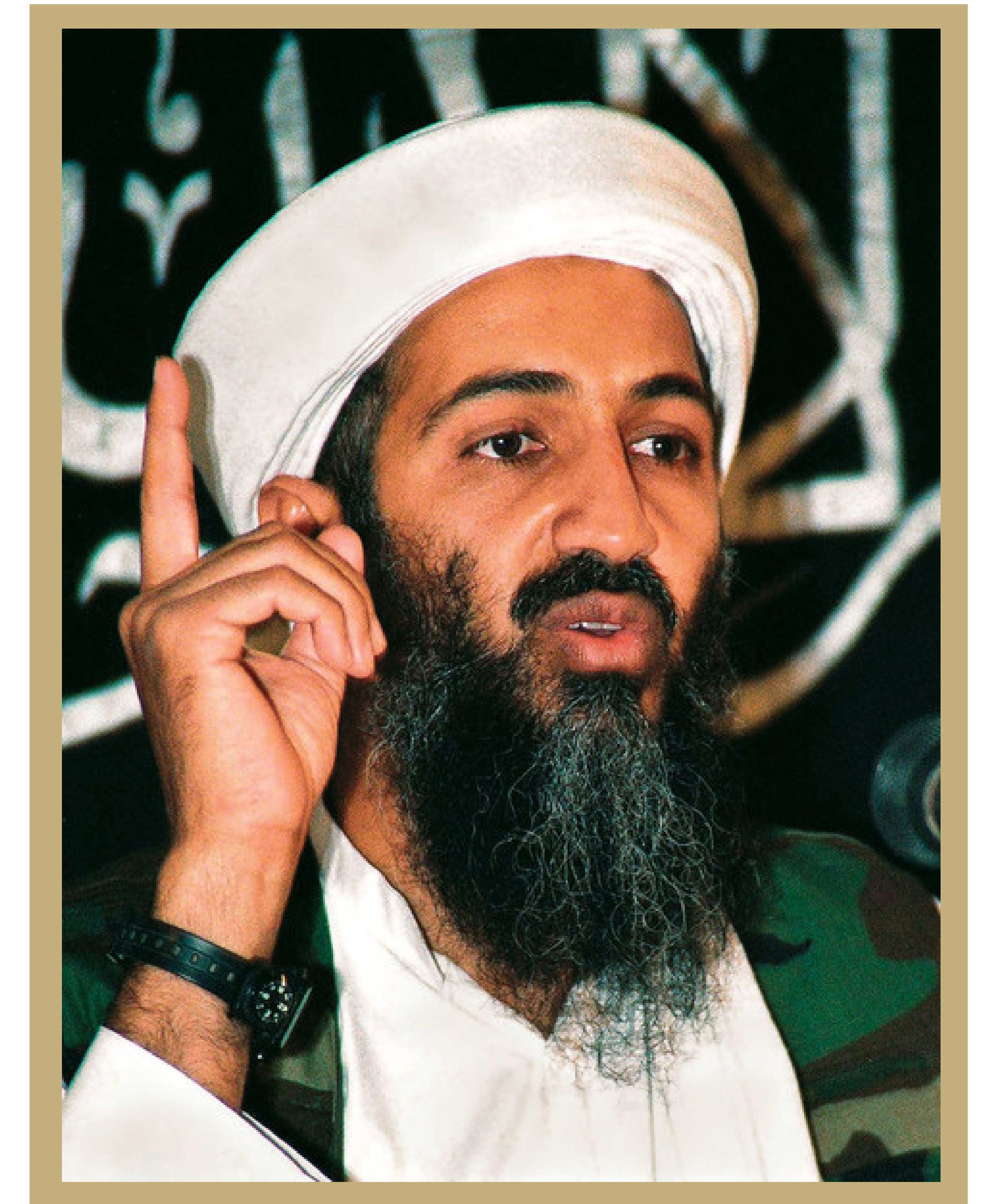
Charisma: A setting apart, endowment of superhuman powers or qualities not accessible to the ordinary person. The powers are regarded as divine gifts or exemplary.

### Method

Charisma was measured by the notoriety of the terrorist leader. Notoriety was determined by a mention by name on the START database, a compilation of information regarding terrorist organizations from the University of Maryland.

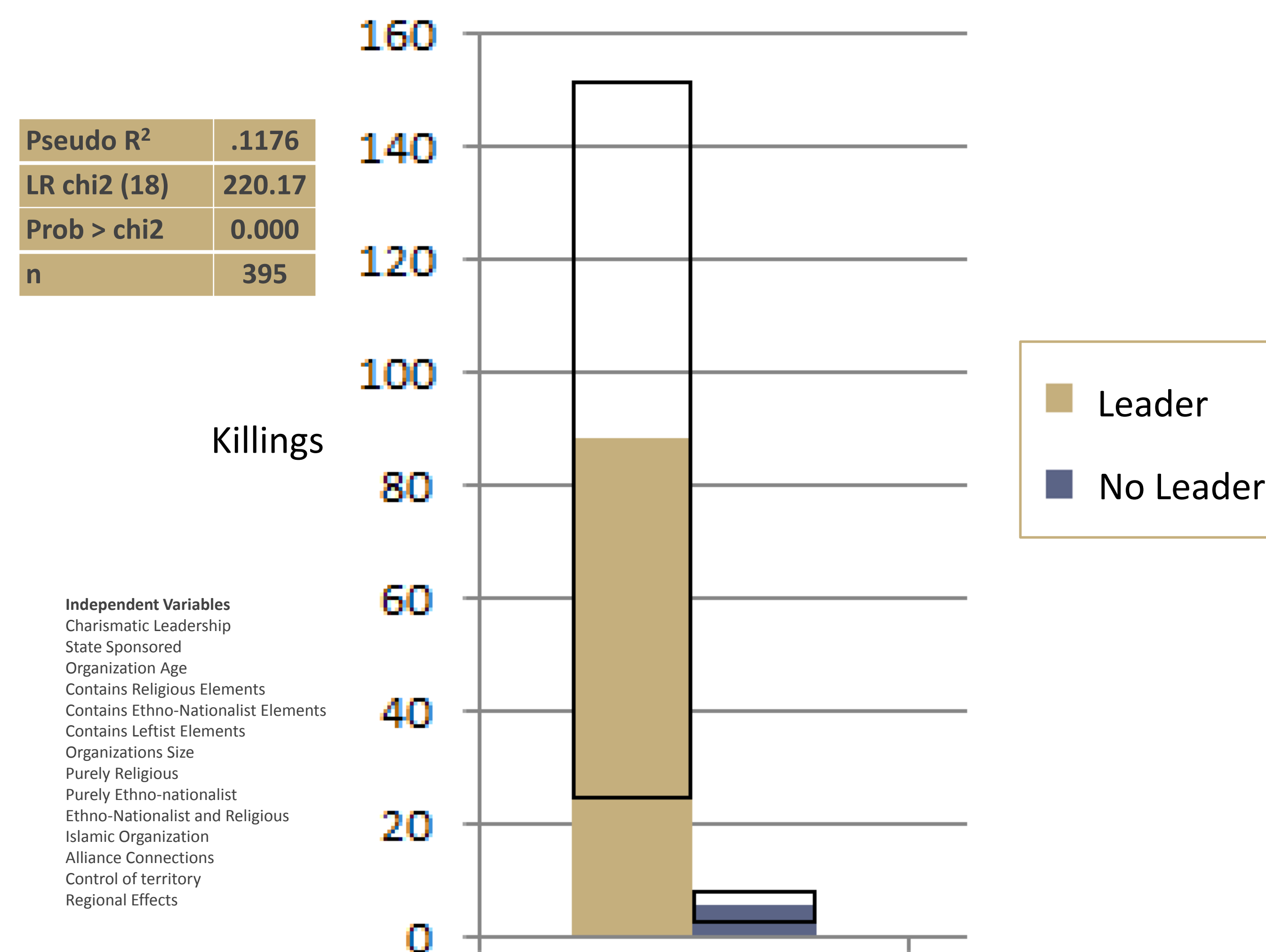
An indicator for charisma was run in a negative binomial regression within the BAAD database, which groups terrorist groups according to their organization type.

I ran two tests with dependent variables of average killings 1998-2005 and the average organization age.



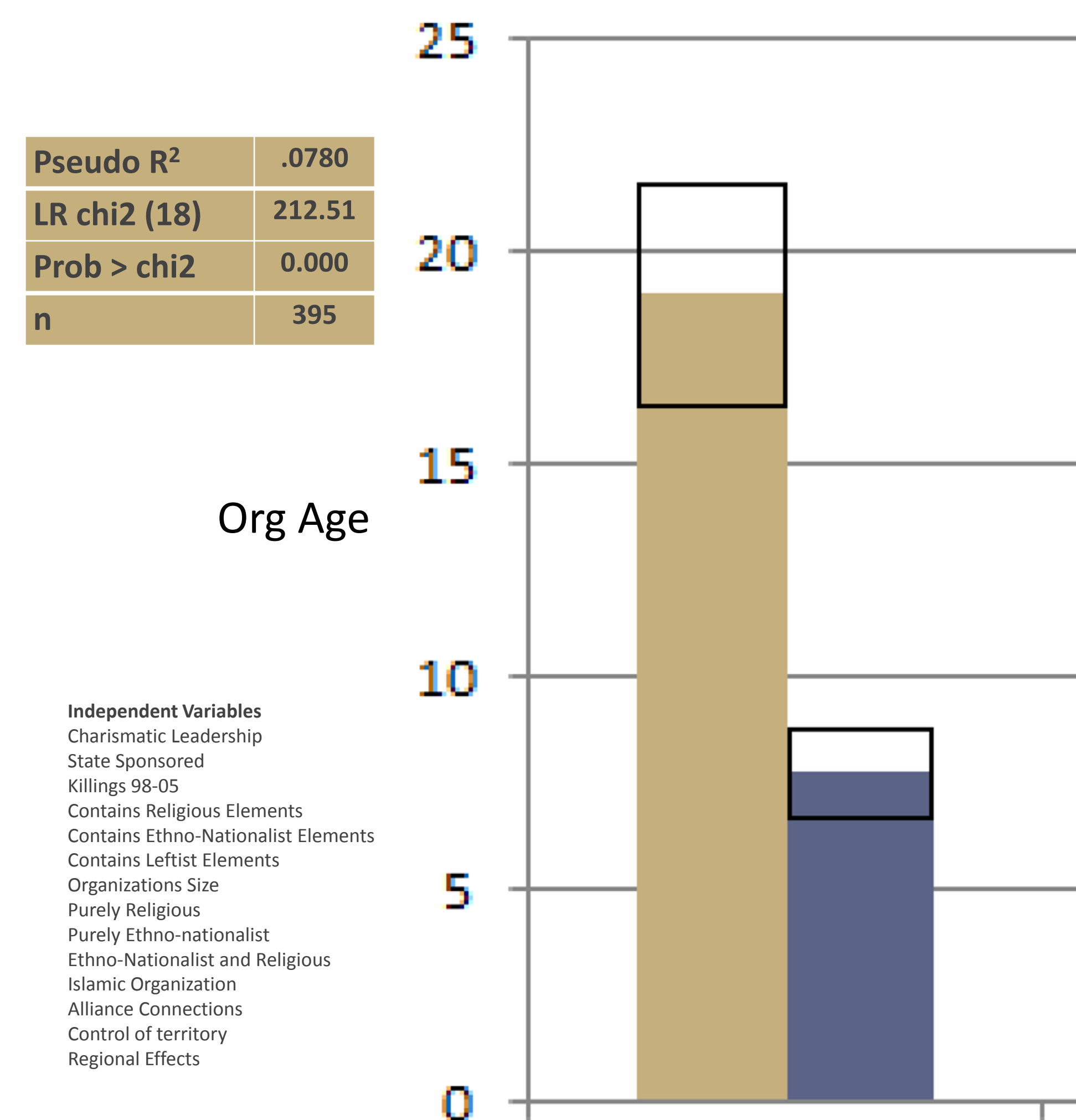
*Average Killings '98-05*

95% Confidence Intervals indicated by the black boxes.



*Average Organization Age in Years*

95% Confidence Intervals indicated by the black boxes



### Findings

The impact of charisma on the organization’s age and the number of fatalities is statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

The presence of a terrorist leader can increase the life-span of the organization by 7 years. It can also increase the number of killings caused by the group by 88 victims.

Thus, policies focusing on the assassination of terrorist leaders may lead to success against terrorist organizations, in both shortening organizational life-spans, and saving lives.