Reviewer's report

Title: Paternal and maternal bonding styles in childhood are associated with the prevalence of chronic pain in a general adult population: the Hisayama Study

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Reviewer: Hannah Schreier

Reviewer's report:

The authors investigate the cross-sectional association between retrospectively reported paternal and maternal bonding style and chronic pain in adulthood among a community-dwelling sample of 760 Japanese adults. Less desirable maternal, but especially paternal, bonding during childhood was associated with greater likelihood of chronic pain in adulthood. This is a clearly presented manuscript that promises to extend the literature on parental bonding into effects on chronic pain. Below are some questions and comments for further improvement of the manuscript.

1. Can the authors clarify assessment of chronic pain? The manuscript states that participants were first asked if they were currently experiencing any pain before being asked about pain duration – does this mean that people who may have experienced pain during the past 24 hours but not at the moment of assessment were excluded? This seems potentially troublesome as chronic pain might vary significantly over the course of the day.

2. The authors made a point of only including participants who could complete the PBI for both parents. However, it seems that no analyses take into account scores for both parents. What was the correlation between paternal and maternal bonding for individuals in this study? What percentage of parents was classified as falling into the same quadrant? Also, what happens when both maternal and paternal bonding are considered as predictors simultaneously? And can ‘desirable’ bonding to one parent make up for less ‘desirable’ bonding to the other parent etc.? I think analyses including both maternal and paternal bonding would be of interest to readers and enhance this manuscript.

3. How come so many people were classified into the ‘affectionless control’ category? How does this compare to other samples?

4. Important information is missing from the manuscript. What was the age range of individuals in the study? Table 1 should include percentages for all categories of the categorical variables, i.e. education and marital status. In addition, the second column in table 2 refers to different statistics and is not labeled.

5. Did results vary by respondent sex? Were chronic pain rates similar among men and women in this study?

6. The authors did not perform formal mediation tests and should refrain from
discussing depression as a possible mediator in the parental bonding – chronic pain association in the Discussion section.

7. The manuscript, especially the second half of the introduction, should be closely edited for language.

Minor comments:

8. Line 73: could the authors provide some examples of such psychosocial factors?

9. Line 97: should be ‘variables’

10. Line 113: should be ‘effects’

11. Lines 112-115: last sentence of introduction not clear

12. Could the authors provide one or two sample items for the PBI and PHQ?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.