

Exergame Training of Executive Function in Preschool Children: Generalizability and Long-term Effects

Cassandra Eng

Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States

Melissa Pocsai

Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States

Dominic Calkosz

Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States

Nathan Williams

Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States

Erik Thiessen

Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States

Anna Fisher

Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States

Abstract

Studies with older children and adults have found that physically engaging video games (i.e., Exergames) that promote both cognitive control and physical activity improve executive function (EF) skills; yet, children below school age remain understudied with regard to the impact of Exergames on EF. Additionally, research on the extent of the impact of Exergames resulting in prolonged changes, and whether training generalizes to EF-related behaviors in a real-world context remains scarce. This study examined the short- and long-term changes in EF of 4- to 5-year-olds after participation in two 20-minute Exergame sessions. Results indicate that Exergame training improved performance on EF tasks and resulted in higher teacher ratings of EF in the classroom compared to a sex-/classroom-/age-matched control group. The improvements in EF persisted over a one-month period. This study provides novel insights into the short-term and long-term effects of Exergame training on executive function in preschool-aged children.