

Abstract

Background: Hexahydrocannabinol (HHC) is a polysynthetic cannabinoid that was introduced to the Czech Republic in May 2022, making it a recent addition to the cannabis product market. Products containing HHC quickly became highly attractive to the younger generation and were widely sold across all age groups before their temporary ban.

Objectives: The primary objective of this study was to map the experiences of HHC use among fourth-year high school students in the Svitavy district of the Pardubice region. The study aimed to determine whether students use the substance, the frequency of use, the form in which it is consumed, and where they obtain it. Another objective was to explore any correlation between the use of HHC and THC among the same respondents.

Methods: Given the topic and objectives of this study, a quantitative research approach was chosen. Data collection was conducted through an anonymous online questionnaire using Google Forms. Five high schools in the Svitavy district were contacted, granting the author access to fourth-year classes where the research was carried out. The schools included grammar/high schools and vocational schools. Data collection occurred in February 2024, with students completing the questionnaire on their smart devices. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables and graphs.

Results: A total of 193 respondents participated in the research, of which 114 were female (59.1 %) and 74 were male (38.3 %). Five respondents (2.6 %) chose not to disclose their gender. Among the respondents, 102 (53 %) attended grammar/high schools, and 91 (47 %) attended vocational schools. Out of the total sample, 82 respondents (42.5 %) had used HHC at least once in their lifetime, with 59 (72 %) reporting multiple experiences with the substance. Repeated use was more common among males (70 %). Repeated use was also more prevalent among grammar/high school students (79 %) compared to vocational school students (68 %). In the past 30 days, 18 % of the total sample (193) had used HHC. The research also confirmed a correlation between HHC and THC use, with 65 % of respondents using HHC following THC out of curiosity. The study provides sufficient information regarding the first use of HHC by

respondents and certain specifics associated with its use. It also offers insights into the positive and negative experiences students had while using HHC.

Conclusion: This research is one of the first studies in the Czech Republic to focus on and map the use of HHC among high school students, specifically in the Svitavy district. The study contributes new insights into whether students use HHC, how frequently, and for what reasons. It also provides an understanding of their HHC use and explores the correlation with THC use.

Keywords: HHC, students, high school, experiences, HHC use