1.1 Literature Review

The following section shall elaborate on the various aspects of addiction as defined and explored by authors in various published articles and peer reviewed journals. The following section shall also bring out studies that elaborate on the meaning and types of addiction, the factors responsible for such substance addiction at large and finally on the behavioral changes and modifications introduced and exaggerated by substance addiction such as drug and alcohol.

1.1.1 Substances of Addiction (Drug and Alcohol)

Literature defines addiction as the ability of one of “giving over” or “being highly devoted” to a person or activity or engaging in a behavior habitually which may uphold various negative or positive implications for the person being involved in the addictive behavior (Sussman & Sussman 2011). Though historically the term merely referred to a phenomenon defining overpowering urges; however, more recently the conceptualization of the term has widened and now it pertains to the “imbalance of central nervous system in some way and thus is defined as a concept having neurobiological underpinnings” (Sussman & Sussman 2011).

As stated above, addiction may occur to a person or activity. Thus, when an individual indulges himself in the act of compulsive and repetitive consumption of an illicit drug despite being aware of the problems that may originate from the drug, possible tolerance to the effects of drug and possible withdrawal symptoms that the drug use should be reduced or stopped altogether, then the state is defined as that of “substance dependence” (Department of social and family welfare, 2010).

Among the phenomenon of substance dependence, the most commonly observed dependence is found to be on the substances of alcohol and drugs. Among the definitions propounded for alcohol and drug dependence, a somewhat significant contribution originates from the Cognitive behavior theory which describes alcohol and drug dependence as “learned behaviors that are acquired through experience” (Kadden, 2002). Drug dependence has been further defined as containing a cluster of physiological, behavioral and cognitive phenomenon of variable intensity,
in which the use of a psychoactive drug or drugs takes on a high priority. It implies a need for repeated doses of drug to feel good or avoid feeling (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2007). Based on their intake, the problem of drug and alcohol dependence is categorized as hazardous use, harmful use, substance abuse and substance dependence. Various problems originate from the use of alcohol and other drugs which are related to intoxication, regular use and dependence. Not all the problems that originate from dependence on the substances of alcohol and drugs are related to dependence or addiction. Sometimes, these problems that originate from the substance addiction are more related to non-dependent patterns of use that pose risks to the person indulged in the dependence and the people around them. However the fact remains that alcohol is an illicit drugs which is a central nervous system depressant and its psychoactive properties contributes to changes in mood, cognition and behavior. The dependence on alcohol is even recognized as a complex syndrome with both physiological and psychological signs and symptoms with the dependence possessing key features such as narrowing of drinking repertoire, loss of control over drinking behavior, withdrawal symptoms on cessation of use, avoidance of withdrawal symptoms by drinking and rapid reoccurrence of drinking patterns after a period of abstinence (Huyghe 1971). Drug dependence on the other hand, remains a broader issue which includes the dependence on various substances such as tobacco, cannabis, cocaine, heroin and other volatile compounds which result in different types of psychological effects with dependence being the stage of acute usage of these substances. Signs of drug dependence mainly include neglecting responsibilities, participating in risky behaviors, criminal problems, relationship problems, physical tolerance, loss of control over substance use and substance use taking over the normal course of a persons’ life. The dependence further leads to the stage of substance misuse or abuse which results in various behavioral changes that then pertains various short term and long term effects on a persons’ physical health, mental health, personal relationships & work and financial situations (Australian Drug Foundation, 2005).

1.1.2 Drug and Classification of Drugs

Technically, a drug is any chemical substance that is occurring naturally or is being pharmaceutically prepared that affects the normal functioning of the body and/or brain. In other
words, any substances the intake of which generate or modify the physical or psychological changes in the person concerned are termed as drugs. Drugs are available in solid, liquid or gaseous forms across the world (Australian Drug Foundation, 2005). In medical terms, a drug taken by any living organism may modify one or more functions in the organism. Medicinal drugs are manufactured to provide temporary relief from unhealthy symptoms and sometimes the drugs are also taken with the objective of permanently supplying the body with necessary substance that the body cannot make. However, the overdose of even medicinal drugs and other forms of drugs sometimes also produce unwanted side effects. Sometimes, the intake of drugs also generates unhealthy dependencies among the living organisms that also contain physiological and behavioral roots (Narconn, 2011).

Drugs are often classified on the basis of following two grounds:

1. Their effects on the central nervous system
2. Whether they are legal or illegal (illicit)

In this research we would be classifying drugs based on their effect on Central Nervous System. Basically, three categories of drugs are recognized based on their effects on the central nervous system which are the following. These drugs are together termed as psychoactive drugs