

activated need produces the tension the person is motivated to eliminate. Once the need is satisfied, the tension is gone, and the need is no longer felt.

Two widely cited need-based theories of motivation, Maslow's need hierarchy theory and Alderfer's existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory, suggest that needs are arranged in a hierarchy.⁴⁹ They propose that needs emerge in a particular pattern whereby certain groups of needs (those important to physical survival) emerge first and must be satisfied before other needs (psychological and social, like affiliation and esteem) can emerge and affect behavior. Once currently activated needs are satisfied, the next most powerful group of needs is felt and will then drive behavior.

Maslow's need hierarchy lists five categories (or levels) of needs: physiological, safety and security, love, status and esteem, and self-actualization. Alderfer's ERG theory reduces Maslow's hierarchy to three levels of needs: existence, relatedness, and growth. More importantly, ERG theory proposes that if a person becomes frustrated trying to satisfy currently activated needs, this frustration causes previously satisfied needs to activate and drive behavior.

Another widely discussed need-based theory is Herzberg's *two-factor theory*.⁵⁰ Herzberg claimed that people have two sets of basic needs, one focusing on survival and another focusing on personal growth. He argued that factors in the workplace that satisfy survival needs, or *hygiene factors*, cannot provide job satisfaction—they only prevent dissatisfaction. Alternatively, *motivator factors*, which satisfy the growth needs, can create feelings of job satisfaction, but their absence will not necessarily lead to dissatisfaction. Following the two-factor theory, workers can be motivated by ensuring hygiene factors are present, thereby preventing dissatisfaction, and then adding motivator factors to create job satisfaction. This strategy is referred to as ***job enrichment***.

Need-hierarchy theories have been popular with managers and students in part because they are easy to understand and intuitively appealing. They seem to make sense. Unfortunately, need theories are difficult to test rigorously, in that they require measuring internal states that people find difficult to accurately identify and explain. Although most studies of Maslow's theory have failed to support it, much of this research has not been conducted properly.⁵¹ Some research has been conducted to test the ERG theory, but there is insufficient evidence to strongly support it.⁵² Needs exist, but a generalizable hierarchy explaining the relationships among them is not available.⁵³

Similar problems exist with the two-factor theory. Herzberg's initial studies supported the notion that there are two separate sets of factors that affect job satisfaction differently.⁵⁴ However, other researchers could not replicate these results using other methods.⁵⁵ Although there is support for job enrichment as a way to motivate employees, the validity of the two-factor theory remains controversial.⁵⁶

So although need-based theories of motivation provide some insight into one category of possible forces that drive behavior, they have proven difficult to test and apply. In our opinion, need theories are insufficient as a stand-alone explanation of motivation. Even so, HRD programs based on need-based theories, such as job enrichment and achievement motivation training, have been used in organizations with some success.