

Tourette's and Triadic Framing

Listening to the System: A New Way to Understand Tics

Imagine a building with good electrical wiring. Most of the time, the lights work exactly as expected. Occasionally, though, one lamp flickers. The flicker is noticeable, sometimes annoying, but it does not mean the building is unsafe or poorly built. It means that, in one small place, energy is leaking through a thinner boundary.

This is the way this model asks us to think about tics.

The everyday question behind it is simple. Why do tics appear in some moments but not others? Why can someone hold them back in one setting and not in another? And why do tics often come with a strong internal feeling that something needs to happen, rather than feeling like a random habit?

To answer this, the framework shifts attention away from counting behaviors and toward understanding how the system is working from the inside. It treats tics not as failures, but as signals of how energy, attention, and control move through a living system.

The goal is not to excuse or ignore the difficulty of tics. It is to describe them accurately, without turning difference into damage.

At the center of the model is the idea of a ****resonance domain****. You can think of a resonance domain like a section of an orchestra. The strings, the brass, and the percussion each follow their own rules. When they are coordinated, the music holds together. When one section gets louder or leaks sound at the wrong moment, you hear it clearly, even though the orchestra is still playing.

A resonance domain is a part of the nervous system where activity gathers, builds, and releases in patterned ways. Tics happen when energy resonates strongly in a small area and finds a narrow outlet.

The model also uses a **triadic structure**, meaning it looks at three connected systems at once. Instead of mixing everything together, it separates vocal expression, movement, and repetitive thinking into three domains that talk to each other. This is like understanding a city by looking separately at traffic, electricity, and water, while still noticing how a problem in one can affect the others.

These structures matter because they explain both stability and change. They show why a person can be generally well-regulated and still have tics, and why changing context can change expression.

Within this framework, tic-related patterns are described as developmental resonance profiles. These are not labels for people. They are descriptions of how regulation tends to work in certain situations.

One profile focuses on **localized regulatory leakage**. Here, control is mostly solid, but a small channel is more open. This might look like frequent blinking or a neck movement. The key point is that the rest of the system is not falling apart. The leak is contained.

Another profile centers on **premonitory urgency**. Many people with tics describe a feeling before the tic, like an itch, pressure, or pull. This internal tension builds until release feels necessary. The tic is not the problem; it is the release valve.

A third profile highlights **stress-triggered discharge**. Under excitement, anxiety, or emotional load, the threshold for release drops. The system is still coherent, but it becomes easier for energy to spill into action. When stress passes, regulation returns.

There is also a profile shaped by **cognitive load**. When someone is deeply focused, tics often quiet down. Attention temporarily strengthens the boundaries that hold energy in. When focus fades, the system relaxes and expression returns.

Finally, environmental threshold resonance appears in low-demand settings. During boredom or rest, there is less structure holding energy in place. Tics emerge not because something is wrong, but because the system has room to move.

Across all these patterns, the same theme appears. The system is capable. It adapts. It recalibrates.

To understand how different kinds of tics relate to each other, the model uses three connected domains.

The first is Vocal Expression. This includes internal urges to make a sound and the sound itself. A vocal tic is understood as a two-part process: an internal push and an external expression. The link between the two matters is more than the specific noise.

The second domain is Movement Dynamics. This covers motor tics and other repetitive movements. Here, the system balances intention and feedback. Movement releases tension, but it is also shaped by how the body senses itself and the environment.

The third domain is Cognitive Compulsion. This involves repeated thoughts or actions that help the mind settle into a “just right” state. Counting, tapping, or repeating phrases can serve this role. These are not random habits; they are ways the system tries to align itself.

These three domains are distinct, but they influence each other. Holding back a vocal tic may increase motor movement. Sensory overload in movement may intensify mental rituals. The model treats these shifts as understandable trade-offs, not mysterious comorbidities.

This is why the triadic structure matters. Balance depends on all three domains sharing the work. When one is overloaded, another often steps in.

In everyday life, this shows clearly. A student may have fewer tics while deeply engaged in a task, but more during unstructured time. An adult may suppress expression at work, only to release it later at home. None of this means the person is losing control. It means the system is managing pressure.

When one element dominates for too long, problems arise. Constant suppression without release increases internal strain. Constant discharge without structure can become disruptive. The model encourages noticing where balance is happening, and where it is being asked to do too much.

The implications of this way of thinking are practical. It shifts attention from “How do we stop this behavior?” to “What is this system responding to?” It invites curiosity instead of judgment.

Readers might start noticing how context shapes expression, how focus changes bodily experience, and how internal signals matter as much as external actions. The framework encourages thinking in patterns rather than labels, and in dynamics rather than defects.

Returning to the opening metaphor, the flickering lamp is not a broken building. It is a clue. When we understand where the energy flows and why, we can work with the system instead of fighting it.

This model does not promise simple fixes. It offers something quieter and more durable: a way to see tics as part of a living, responsive system that is doing its best to stay in balance.

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Disclosure Statement

This paper presents a conceptual and theoretical framework intended for educational and scholarly discussion. It is not a substitute for professional mental health diagnosis or treatment and makes no clinical or therapeutic claims. Certain technical, computational, and implementation details are proprietary and therefore not disclosed.