


RESEARCH ARTICLE			The Phenomenon of Déjà Vu: Between the Biological and the Psychological
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Abstract This study explores the nature of the déjà vu phenomenon and identifies its leading causes. A bibliographic research method was employed, which was based on the collection of information and data from scientific sources and references and was supported by a survey of a large sample of individuals regarding whether they had experienced this phenomenon (déjà vu). The findings ultimately reveal insights into the essence of déjà vu, its primary causes, and, through the survey, indicate that it occurs among many individuals, with a frequency ranging between 60% and 70%, albeit irregularly.			
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Introduction

Human existence is highly complex, often leaving science incapable of providing full explanations. This is due, in part, to the fact that human beings have only recently become the subject of systematic scientific study, particularly in terms of their biological and psychological dimensions. The complexity arises from the dual role of the human as both the researcher and the researched, in addition to religious considerations that historically prohibited dissection and experimentation on the human body. Consequently, many phenomena have not received sufficient scientific attention. Among these phenomena is déjà vu, also referred to as the illusion of having previously seen an event. Through this study, we aim to examine its essence, nature, causes, patterns, and most significant scientific interpretations.

1. Problem Statement

The human being is considered the only creature characterised by consciousness and intellect. The latter functions as a faculty through which thought, imagination, and perception occur, enabling the individual to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, reality and illusion, and truth and imagination. However, although the human mind has explained many phenomena, whether physical or human, it remains puzzled when confronted with certain phenomena that affect it directly. One such phenomenon is déjà vu, also known as the illusion of having already seen an event, which currently affects between 60% and 70% of individuals, according to WebMD. This phenomenon occurs when a person feels that a situation has been previously experienced, despite encountering it for the first time. This often leads to confusion between what

is real and what is illusory. Furthermore, *déjà vu* is not limited to visual illusions but may also involve auditory, gustatory, or cognitive illusions, all of which negatively impact human life.

Despite individual differences, people share a common denominator reflected in the dynamism of their behaviours, which can influence many aspects of life. They may themselves be influenced by phenomena such as *déjà vu*. Hence, this study was undertaken to address the following research questions:

- ❖ What is the nature of the *déjà vu* phenomenon?
- ❖ Does the *déjà vu* phenomenon have distinct patterns and types?
- ❖ Is *déjà vu* a psychological or a biological phenomenon?
- ❖ What are the most common patterns of the *Déjà Vu* phenomenon?

1.1 Study objectives

This study aims to identify the fundamental concepts and dimensions of the *déjà vu* phenomenon, its types, and its interpretations. Specifically, the objectives are as follows:

- Examine the nature of *déjà vu*.
- Identify the most common patterns and types of the *déjà vu* phenomenon.
- Explore the scientific explanations of the real causes underlying the occurrence of *déjà vu*.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its attempt to shed light on a phenomenon frequently experienced by many individuals yet often misunderstood in terms of its causes or even its existence as a phenomenon. Our study constitutes a serious attempt to define *déjà vu* and to determine its nature. Furthermore, it provides readers and researchers with a detailed scientific explanation of a subject that has long remained obscure. We also aim for this study to serve as a foundation for future scientific research addressing this phenomenon from different perspectives, in addition to enriching the academic literature by making this work a reference for researchers, particularly as the available references on this phenomenon are extremely limited.

2. *Déjà Vu*

2.1 Definition of *Déjà Vu*

The term *déjà vu* is French for "already seen." It is one of the most widespread phenomena among people. It refers to the sensation that an individual has previously lived through a moment before it occurs, as although they possess prior knowledge of it. It is also described as a strange emotional state in which specific situations or scenes appear familiar, as if they had been experienced previously, or as although one has encountered the same scene in an almost identical reproduction at an unknown time in the past.

Émile Boirac is considered the first to have coined the term *déjà vu* to describe this phenomenon of prior vision as an individual's feeling that they have already seen or lived through the present situation. A sense of familiarity, awe, and strangeness typically accompanies this phenomenon. The psychologist Freud referred to it as a supernatural occurrence, describing it as a previous experience that seems to have been lived before, often appearing to the individual in dreams (Atyat Abu al-Aneen, 2022, p. 15).

2.2 Scientific Explanations of the *Déjà Vu* Phenomenon

- **Temporal Lobe Theory:** Scientists conducting experiments on individuals experiencing déjà vu found that some suffer from temporal lobe epilepsy. The temporal lobe is the region responsible for memory retrieval, suggesting a neurological basis for this phenomenon.
- **Hemispheric theory:** Researchers have also discovered that both cerebral hemispheres receive visual information simultaneously. However, at times, the information reaches one hemisphere a fraction of a second earlier than the other. The first hemisphere stores the information briefly before it is transmitted to the second hemisphere, which completes the process of perception. During this delay, the individual experiences a sensation of familiarity, as if they have already lived through or seen the moment.

2.3 Pharmacological and Clinical Correlates of Déjà Vu

- **Pharmacological Effects:** Scientists have discovered that certain medications can induce a state of déjà vu. These symptoms have been observed in individuals taking medication for influenza. Researchers confirmed that the phenomenon of déjà vu in such cases was the result of elevated dopamine levels, which are neurotransmitters in the brain. Despite these findings, research into the phenomenon of déjà vu continues, even though it is generally regarded as a natural occurrence that does not cause concern (Halgren, 1994, p. 71).
- **Epilepsy:** Déjà vu has sometimes been reported as a symptom of partial seizures in individuals with epilepsy. In such cases, it may serve as a warning sign that a seizure is about to occur.
- **Migraine:** Some individuals suffering from migraines experience sensations resembling déjà vu as part of the aura phase, a set of neurological symptoms that precede the onset of headache.
- **Temporal Lobe Epilepsy:** This specific form of epilepsy, associated with abnormalities in the temporal lobe of the brain, can lead to recurrent and intense experiences of déjà vu.
- **Schizophrenia:** Déjà vu has occasionally been reported as a symptom of schizophrenia, although it is only one of many possible manifestations of the disorder.
- **Anxiety or stress:** High levels of anxiety or stress may sometimes result in perceptual distortions and feelings of unreality, which can include experiences similar to déjà vu (Halgren, 1994, p. 71).

2.4 Types of Déjà Vu Phenomenon

- *Déjà Pressenti:* Having felt or touched something before.
- *Déjà Connu:* Having already known this person.
- *Déjà Raconté:* Having already been told this piece of news.
- *Déjà Dit:* Having already heard these words spoken before.
- *Déjà Rencontré:* Having already encountered or met this thing before.
- *Déjà Entendu:* Having already heard this sound before.
- *Déjà Rêvé:* Having already dreamed this dream before.
- *Déjà Sentit:* Having already smelt this odour before.

- *Déjà Goûté*: Having already tasted this flavour before.
- *Déjà Sur*: Having already known this idea before.
- *Déjà Fait*: Having already completed this specific task before.
- *Déjà Parlé*: Having already spoken these words before.
- *Déjà Visité*: Having already visited this place before.
- *Déjà Pensé*: Having already thought in this way before.

2.5 Groups Most Prone to the Déjà Vu Phenomenon

The demographic group most prone to experiencing déjà vu is youth. A few individuals reported having their first experience at the age of six, whereas many others indicated that their initial encounter with déjà vu occurred before the age of ten. The delay in onset for some individuals may be explained by the fact that one must be capable of recognising that the feeling of familiarity they are experiencing is powerful. For younger children, this may be difficult to discern.

Between the ages of 15 and 25, individuals tend to experience déjà vu more frequently than at later stages of life. Reports indicate that the number of déjà vu experiences steadily decreases after the age of 25 (Brown, 2004).

2.6 Cases of Déjà Vu Requiring Medical Attention

There is generally no need for concern when experiencing déjà vu occasionally. However, if it occurs frequently, lasts for more than a few seconds, or is accompanied by other symptoms, it is advisable to consult a physician. Dr. Khoury affirms that déjà vu is a rare occurrence among healthy individuals and typically occurs twice a year. If it recurs to the extent that it causes one to question its frequency, medical consultation is recommended. It is also essential to inform a doctor if déjà vu episodes are accompanied by other distressing symptoms such as the following:

- Confusion
- Headaches
- Loss of consciousness
- Weakness
- Seizures
- Tremors (Health, 2025)

Conclusion

Although there are many scientific interpretations of the déjà vu phenomenon, ranging from the biological approach, which is grounded in scientific laboratory tools such as observation and experimentation, to the psychological approach, which is based on psychological testing and assessments, science has not yet been able to provide a definitive explanation of its true causes. Accordingly, this study may serve as a fertile foundation for future scientific research addressing déjà vu from multiple perspectives. Such research may enable us to determine its underlying causes better and, ultimately, to control its impact on human behaviour.

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