



The Relationship Between Déjà Vu and Ru'yā Ṣādiqah in the Qur'an: A Thematic Exegetical Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between déjà vu in modern psychology and ru'yā ṣādiqah in the Qur'an as forms of anticipatory inner experience that appear to precede real events. The research aims to identify points of convergence at the level of human experience while critically distinguishing their epistemological foundations. A qualitative interdisciplinary design was employed, combining thematic Qur'anic exegesis with conceptual analysis of contemporary psychological theories. Relevant Qur'anic verses concerning ru'yā were systematically collected and interpreted using a thematic approach, then analytically compared with psychological explanations of déjà vu, particularly those related to memory processing, perceptual familiarity, and dream-based cognition. The findings reveal that both phenomena produce a strong sense that an event has been previously experienced before its actual occurrence, indicating a shared phenomenological structure. However, this similarity does not extend to their underlying nature. Déjà vu is identified as a cognitive phenomenon arising from internal processes such as memory mismatch and subconscious activation, resulting in uncertain and non-verifiable impressions. In contrast, ru'yā ṣādiqah is presented in the Qur'an as a structured and meaningful experience rooted in divine communication, characterized by clarity, truth, and eventual realization in historical reality. Their temporal structures also differ, with déjà vu reflecting retrospective recognition, whereas ru'yā ṣādiqah embodies prospective anticipation that is later confirmed. This study contributes by proposing a framework of phenomenological correspondence with epistemological divergence, offering a rigorous interdisciplinary perspective that maintains the distinction between cognitive experience and revelation.

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INTRODUCTION

Human experience is not limited to observable behavior but extends to complex inner phenomena that often challenge conventional explanations. Across intellectual traditions, certain experiences appear to anticipate or precede real events, raising fundamental questions about the nature of time, perception, and knowledge. In Islamic thought, such experiences are articulated through the concept of ru'yā ṣādiqah, understood as meaningful dreams that may convey truth or guidance beyond ordinary cognition (Arroisi et al; 2025). In contrast, modern psychology examines comparable experiences through cognitive and neurological frameworks, emphasizing mechanisms of memory, perception, and familiarity. One of the most widely discussed phenomena in this regard is déjà vu, typically described as a false sense of prior experience in a novel situation (Barzykowski & Moulin, 2023; Perrin et al., 2024). While these concepts emerge from fundamentally different epistemological systems, they converge at the level of human experience, particularly in their apparent relation to events that feel "already known." This convergence raises a deeper theoretical question about whether such similarities reflect shared structures of experience or merely

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superficial analogies. Addressing this question requires a careful and methodologically grounded interdisciplinary approach.

Empirically, déjà vu is a well-documented phenomenon that occurs across diverse populations and contexts. Recent studies suggest that a large proportion of individuals report experiencing déjà vu at least once, with higher prevalence among younger adults and those with heightened cognitive activity (Frankle, 2022; Hadzic & Andersson, 2024). Contemporary research increasingly frames déjà vu as a product of cognitive processing, particularly involving familiarity signals that are triggered without corresponding recollection (Frankle, 2022; Markowitsch et al., 2023). Other accounts emphasize predictive processing, suggesting that déjà vu arises when the brain generates expectations that partially align with incoming stimuli, creating a sense of prior occurrence (Fernández Velasco & Loev, 2025; Gillinder et al., 2022). Although psychoanalytic perspectives, such as those proposed by Freud, associate déjà vu with unconscious memory traces (Koslowski et al., 2023; Le Bon, 2025), more recent approaches prioritize neurocognitive explanations. Nevertheless, alternative theories—most notably Funkhouser's notion of precognitive dreams—propose that certain déjà vu experiences may be linked to previously experienced dream content (Eranimos & Funkhouser, 2023). This diversity of explanations indicates that déjà vu remains theoretically unresolved, particularly regarding its temporal and experiential dimensions. Consequently, the phenomenon continues to invite reinterpretation beyond strictly empirical models.

Within Islamic intellectual tradition, the concept of ru'yā ṣādiqah offers a distinct yet equally sophisticated framework for understanding anticipatory inner experiences. Qur'anic narratives present dreams not merely as symbolic mental events but as meaningful experiences that may precede and correspond to historical realities, especially in the lives of prophets (Erdoğan, 2024; Hussain, 2024). Classical exegetes consistently interpret such dreams as forms of divine communication, characterized by clarity, coherence, and eventual realization. Unlike ordinary dreams, ru'yā ṣādiqah occupies a specific epistemological status, often described as a form of truth-bearing vision that cannot be reduced to subjective imagination (Loht, 2023; Pezzini, 2023). Contemporary scholarship further emphasizes that these experiences operate within a broader spiritual ontology, where knowledge is not confined to sensory or rational processes alone (Aždajić, 2024a; Shani, 2025). However, despite this conceptual richness, discussions of ru'yā ṣādiqah remain largely confined within theological and exegetical domains. As a result, their potential relevance to contemporary debates on cognition and consciousness has not been fully explored. This disciplinary separation limits the possibility of a more integrative understanding of anticipatory experience.

The growing emphasis on interdisciplinary research highlights the need to reconsider how inner experiences are conceptualized across different knowledge systems. In particular, the apparent similarity between ru'yā ṣādiqah and déjà vu raises important questions about the structure and interpretation of experiences that precede reality. While these phenomena are often treated as unrelated due to their distinct epistemological foundations, their phenomenological overlap suggests the possibility of a more nuanced relationship. At the same time, uncritical comparisons risk conflating fundamentally different categories, especially when divine revelation is juxtaposed with cognitive processes. Therefore, a rigorous analytical framework is required to distinguish between similarity at the level of experience and difference at the level of meaning and source. Such an approach is not only necessary for conceptual clarity but also for maintaining the integrity of both religious and scientific perspectives. In this sense, the urgency of the present study lies in addressing a conceptual tension that has not yet been adequately resolved. By doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on the limits and possibilities of interdisciplinary inquiry.

A review of existing literature reveals substantial developments in both psychological and Islamic studies, yet these developments remain largely disconnected. In psychology, recent research has advanced understanding of déjà vu through frameworks such as familiarity-based memory models, predictive processing, and metacognitive conflict (Aždajić, 2024b; Shutaleva, 2023). These studies consistently emphasize internal cognitive mechanisms, often excluding metaphysical or non-empirical dimensions. In parallel, Islamic scholarship has produced extensive analyses of dreams within Qur'anic exegesis and Hadith studies, focusing on classification, interpretation, and spiritual significance (Aziz, 2025). Thematic exegesis has also emerged as a prominent method for examining recurring concepts in the Qur'an, enabling more systematic interpretations of complex themes (Kaltsum & Amin, 2024; Rahman & Faizuddin, 2025). Despite these advances, few studies attempt to

place these two bodies of knowledge in meaningful dialogue. When such attempts do occur, they tend to be descriptive rather than analytically rigorous, often highlighting similarities without addressing underlying theoretical tensions. This indicates a lack of integrative frameworks capable of bridging these domains in a critical and methodologically sound manner.

More importantly, existing studies reveal a deeper conceptual limitation related to the treatment of anticipatory experience. Psychological research often explains déjà vu as a byproduct of memory error or perceptual mismatch, thereby situating it within a framework of cognitive fallibility. In contrast, Islamic interpretations of ru'yā ṣādiqah attribute such experiences to divine origin, positioning them within a framework of epistemic certainty. This divergence reflects not merely a difference in explanation but a fundamental contrast in how knowledge itself is defined and validated. Current literature has not adequately addressed this epistemological divide, nor has it clarified how phenomenological similarity can coexist with ontological difference. As a result, discussions of these phenomena remain fragmented, lacking a coherent model for comparative analysis. This gap is not simply empirical but conceptual, requiring a rethinking of how interdisciplinary comparisons are constructed. Without such a framework, attempts to relate these concepts risk either oversimplification or category confusion.

In response to these limitations, this study aims to develop a critical and structured analysis of the relationship between ru'yā ṣādiqah in the Qur'an and the phenomenon of déjà vu in modern psychology. Using a thematic exegetical approach, the study examines relevant Qur'anic verses to identify the defining characteristics and functions of ru'yā ṣādiqah, and then situates these findings within contemporary psychological discussions of anticipatory experience. Rather than equating the two phenomena, the study proposes a framework that distinguishes between phenomenological correspondence and epistemological divergence. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of an interdisciplinary model that integrates religious and psychological perspectives without collapsing their differences. Practically, it offers a more refined basis for understanding inner experiences that appear to precede reality, particularly in contexts where scientific and spiritual interpretations intersect. By articulating both the points of convergence and the boundaries of comparison, this study advances a more rigorous approach to interdisciplinary inquiry.

METHOD

This study adopts an interdisciplinary qualitative research design that integrates thematic Qur'anic exegesis with conceptual analysis from contemporary psychology. The research is positioned as a conceptual-comparative qualitative study, aiming to critically examine anticipatory inner experiences across two distinct epistemological systems. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study seeks to interpret meaning structures, epistemic foundations, and phenomenological patterns rather than quantify variables. The analysis is grounded in the thematic analysis framework of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, which emphasizes systematic coding and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2023b), as well as the qualitative data analysis procedures proposed by Virginia Braun, and Victoria Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2023a). This combination allows for a rigorous yet flexible interpretation of textual data while maintaining analytical transparency. The design also incorporates a comparative epistemological framework, distinguishing between phenomenological similarity and ontological divergence. This ensures that the analysis does not conflate religious and psychological constructs but instead examines their relationship critically. Consequently, the chosen design supports both interpretive depth and interdisciplinary coherence.

The study was conducted within a textual and theoretical research environment, without reliance on a physical field site. The research process took place over a six-month period from January to June 2026, encompassing stages of data identification, selection, coding, analysis, and synthesis. The "research setting" is therefore constituted by Qur'anic texts, classical and contemporary tafsir literature, and peer-reviewed psychological studies on déjà vu. This approach aligns with the principles of qualitative library research, where the field of inquiry is constructed through scholarly discourse rather than empirical observation. The temporal framework ensured iterative analysis and continuous refinement of themes, which is essential in qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, the absence of spatial constraints allowed for a broader and more

comprehensive selection of sources. This context enhances the depth and theoretical richness of the study.

In this research, the concept of population and sample is operationalized as a corpus of texts rather than human participants. The population includes all Qur'anic verses related to dreams, inner experiences, and anticipatory phenomena, as well as psychological literature addressing déjà vu and related constructs. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select data that are directly relevant to the research objectives (Tajik et al., 2025). The inclusion criteria for Qur'anic data required verses that explicitly involve ru'yā and have been interpreted in authoritative tafsir works, including Surah Yusuf (12:4, 12:43, 12:100), Surah aṣ-Ṣāffāt (37:102–105), and Surah al-Faḥ (48:27). For psychological sources, the selection prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2022 and 2026 that address déjà vu, familiarity processes, and precognitive experiences. Exclusion criteria included non-scholarly sources, outdated references without theoretical relevance, and studies lacking methodological rigor. This sampling strategy ensures both relevance and analytical depth. As a result, the selected corpus provides a balanced representation of both disciplines.

The primary research instrument consists of a structured coding framework and analytical matrix developed specifically for this study. The coding scheme is designed to extract comparable dimensions across both domains, enabling systematic analysis. The key coding categories include: (1) source of experience (divine vs. cognitive), (2) temporality (anticipatory vs. retrospective), (3) epistemic status (certainty vs. probability), (4) mode of manifestation (dream vs. waking cognition), and (5) functional meaning (guidance vs. perceptual anomaly). These categories are derived from both tafsir literature and cognitive psychology theories, ensuring theoretical alignment. The instrument was refined iteratively during the coding process to accommodate emerging patterns, consistent with qualitative research practices (Saldaña, 2016). Additional tools such as digital annotation software and reference management systems were used to maintain data organization and traceability. This structured approach enhances consistency and analytical rigor.

To ensure validity and reliability, multiple strategies were employed. Content validity was established through expert judgment involving scholars in Qur'anic studies and psychology, ensuring the relevance of selected data and analytical categories. Construct validity was achieved by aligning the coding framework with established theories in both disciplines. Reliability was strengthened through iterative coding and cross-checking procedures, where data were reviewed multiple times to ensure consistency. In addition, triangulation was applied by comparing interpretations across classical tafsir, contemporary scholarship, and empirical psychological studies (Denzin, 2017). Reflexivity was also maintained to minimize researcher bias during interpretation. These procedures collectively enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Thus, the study meets the standards of rigor expected in qualitative research.

The data collection process followed a systematic sequence. Initially, relevant texts were identified through database searches and classical references. These texts were then screened based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Subsequently, selected data were organized into structured documentation sheets. The next stage involved intensive reading and coding, where key concepts were extracted and categorized. Finally, the coded data were synthesized into thematic patterns for comparative analysis. The entire process was iterative, allowing continuous refinement of categories and interpretations. Detailed documentation was maintained throughout to ensure transparency and replicability.

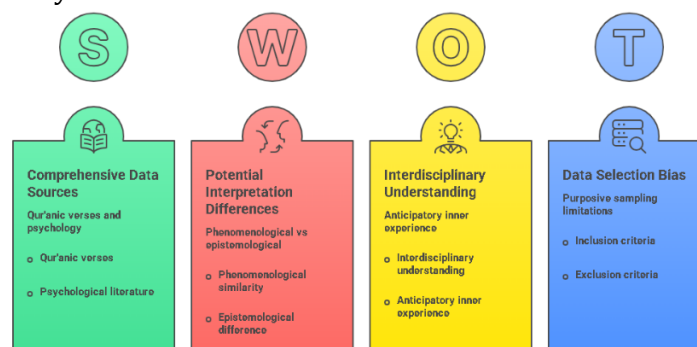


Figure 1. Analytical Framework of the Interdisciplinary Study on Ru'yā Ṣādiqah and Déjà Vu

Figure 1 illustrates the overall analytical workflow of this study, beginning with data identification and progressing through selection, coding, thematic analysis, and comparative interpretation. The process starts with the systematic collection of Qur'anic verses and psychological literature, followed by screening based on relevance criteria. The selected data are then subjected to structured coding using predefined analytical categories. In the next stage, themes are developed through iterative analysis, following the principles of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke. These themes are subsequently compared across the two domains to identify both convergences and divergences. The final stage involves interpreting the findings within a comparative epistemological framework, distinguishing between phenomenological similarity and ontological difference. This structured workflow ensures methodological transparency and enhances the replicability of the study.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis combined with comparative conceptual analysis. The process began with data reduction, followed by open coding to identify key concepts. These codes were then grouped into categories and synthesized into broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis emphasized both convergence and divergence between the two phenomena, ensuring analytical balance. Comparative interpretation was conducted by examining each theme across the coding categories, particularly focusing on epistemological distinctions. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how similar experiences are constructed differently across disciplines. The analysis was conducted manually with support from qualitative data tools to maintain flexibility. As a result, the findings reflect both systematic rigor and interpretive depth.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. All sources were properly cited to ensure academic integrity and avoid plagiarism. The interpretation of Qur'anic texts was conducted with respect for religious sensitivity, avoiding reductive or speculative claims. Transparency in methodological procedures was maintained to allow replication and critical evaluation. Additionally, the study adheres to principles of scholarly responsibility in interdisciplinary research. By ensuring ethical rigor, the study maintains both academic credibility and intellectual integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study demonstrate that both *déjà vu* and *ru'yā ṣādiqah* represent forms of anticipatory inner experience, yet they differ fundamentally in their epistemological grounding, structural formation, and interpretive function. From the perspective of modern psychology, *déjà vu* is identified as a cognitive phenomenon characterized by an immediate sense of familiarity toward a present situation that lacks a corresponding memory trace. This experience arises spontaneously and is typically brief, creating a perception of repetition without verifiable prior occurrence. The data indicate that *déjà vu* operates within the domain of perceptual processing and memory recognition, where the mind generates a sense of prior exposure despite the absence of actual recall. This suggests that *déjà vu* is not predictive in nature but reconstructive, emerging from internal cognitive mechanisms. As a result, its meaning remains ambiguous and cannot be confirmed through external reality. This establishes *déjà vu* as an experience rooted in subjective cognition rather than objective truth.

A deeper examination reveals that certain interpretations of *déjà vu* extend beyond basic memory explanations by associating the phenomenon with prior dream experiences. In this structure, *déjà vu* is understood as the reactivation of latent dream fragments that become meaningful only when a corresponding real-life situation occurs. This temporal configuration is characterized by retrospective recognition rather than prospective certainty. The initial experience is often unclear and lacks immediate significance, while its perceived meaning emerges only after the real event unfolds. This pattern reinforces the interpretation that *déjà vu* is dependent on post-event cognition rather than pre-event knowledge. Consequently, even when linked to dreams, *déjà vu* does not function as a reliable indicator of future events. Instead, it remains a cognitive illusion shaped by the interaction between perception, memory, and subconscious processing. This reinforces its position within the framework of human cognitive limitation.

In contrast, the Qur'anic concept of ru'yā ṣādiqah exhibits a fundamentally different structure, functioning as a meaningful and directed form of inner experience. The findings show that ru'yā ṣādiqah is consistently presented as an experience that precedes reality in a clear and structured manner. This is evident in the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَبْنَئِي لِي آزَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى قَالَ يَا بَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

These verses illustrate that the dream is not merely symbolic but prescriptive, requiring action and later being validated by reality. The anticipatory nature of this experience is not probabilistic but definitive, as the truth of the vision is guaranteed within its framework. The temporal relationship between vision and reality is therefore linear and confirmatory, rather than interpretive. This distinguishes ru'yā ṣādiqah from cognitive experiences that rely on post hoc recognition. The findings indicate that such experiences function as a form of guided knowledge rather than subjective perception.

A similar structural pattern is observed in the narrative of Prophet Yusuf, where symbolic dreams are later realized in concrete historical events:

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ

These findings reveal that ru'yā ṣādiqah may initially appear symbolic, yet its meaning is not constructed retrospectively but unfolds progressively in accordance with reality. The relationship between symbol and event is not arbitrary but predetermined within a framework of meaning. This establishes a unique temporal structure in which vision precedes realization with inherent coherence. Unlike déjà vu, which produces a vague sense of repetition, ru'yā ṣādiqah provides a structured anticipation that is later confirmed. The findings therefore indicate that the anticipatory nature of ru'yā ṣādiqah is embedded within a system of meaning rather than cognitive reconstruction.

This pattern is further reinforced in the experience of Prophet Muhammad:

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَهُ الرُّؤْيَا بِالْحَقِّ لَتَدْخُلَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِذَا تَخَافُونَ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا

The findings indicate that the truth of the vision is explicitly affirmed and subsequently realized, even when there is a temporal delay. This demonstrates that the validity of ru'yā ṣādiqah is not dependent on immediate realization but on eventual confirmation. The delay does not introduce ambiguity but rather reinforces certainty within a broader temporal framework. This highlights a key distinction between predictive knowledge and cognitive illusion. While déjà vu relies on momentary perception, ru'yā ṣādiqah operates within a sustained structure of meaning and fulfillment. This establishes its position as a form of epistemologically grounded experience.

To further clarify the distinction, the findings are summarized in the following analytical comparison:

Table 1. Comparative Analytical Dimensions of Déjà Vu and Ru'yā Ṣādiqah

Dimension	Déjà Vu	Ru'yā Ṣādiqah
Source of Experience	Cognitive processing	Divine communication
Temporality	Retrospective recognition	Prospective anticipation
Epistemic Status	Uncertain, subjective	Certain, truth-bearing
Mode of Occurrence	Waking consciousness	Dream state
Meaning Formation	Constructed after event	Pre-structured before event
Relation to Reality	No verifiable confirmation	Confirmed in reality
Function	Perceptual anomaly	Guidance and indication

The table demonstrates that while both phenomena share a surface-level similarity in producing a sense of prior experience, their underlying structures differ significantly. Déjà vu operates as a cognitive reconstruction of familiarity, whereas ru'yā ṣādiqah functions as a guided anticipation of reality. This distinction is not merely descriptive but reflects a deeper divergence in

how knowledge is generated and validated. The findings indicate that the similarity between the two is limited to phenomenological appearance, while their epistemological foundations remain fundamentally distinct. This suggests that anticipatory inner experiences cannot be understood as a single category but must be analyzed according to their source and structure.

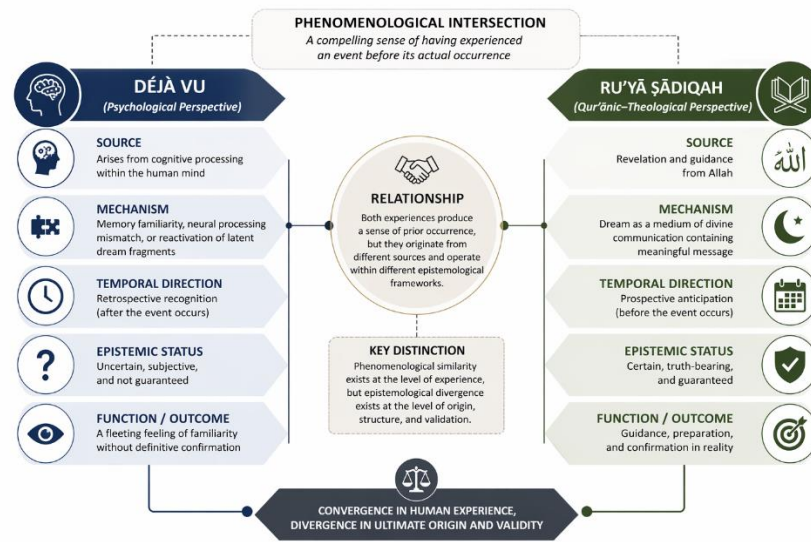


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the Relationship Between Déjà Vu and Ru'yā Ṣādiqah

Figure 2 presents a conceptual model illustrating the relationship between déjà vu and ru'yā ṣādiqah. The model highlights a shared phenomenological layer, where both experiences produce a sense of prior occurrence, while distinguishing two separate epistemological pathways. Déjà vu emerges from cognitive processing, leading to subjective recognition without certainty, whereas ru'yā ṣādiqah originates from divine guidance, leading to confirmed reality. The model demonstrates that the connection between the two phenomena lies in experiential similarity rather than ontological equivalence. This framework provides a structured way to understand how similar experiences can arise from fundamentally different sources. It also clarifies the boundary between psychological interpretation and theological meaning.

Overall, the findings establish that the relationship between déjà vu and ru'yā ṣādiqah is best understood as a phenomenological correspondence with epistemological divergence. This distinction allows both phenomena to be analyzed within a single framework without reducing one to the other. The results therefore contribute to a more refined understanding of anticipatory inner experiences, demonstrating that similarity in experience does not imply similarity in origin or meaning.

Discussion

The first major finding of this study establishes that déjà vu operates as a retrospective cognitive reconstruction rather than a genuinely anticipatory experience. Conceptually, this suggests that the sense of “having experienced” a present moment emerges from familiarity signals that are decoupled from explicit memory retrieval. Within cognitive psychology, this aligns with dual-process memory theories, where familiarity and recollection are processed independently, allowing familiarity to be triggered in the absence of contextual recall (Perrin et al., 2024; Markowitsch et al., 2023). Theoretically, this supports predictive processing models, which argue that the brain continuously generates expectations and occasionally misattributes them as prior experience (Fernández Velasco & Loev, 2025). Empirical studies conducted between 2021 and 2026 consistently reinforce this interpretation, showing that déjà vu correlates with neural mismatches in temporal processing rather than actual memory traces (Gillinder et al., 2022; Hadzic & Andersson, 2024). However, this study extends prior research by emphasizing that even when déjà vu appears temporally anticipatory, it remains structurally dependent on post-event cognition. This nuance challenges earlier interpretations that loosely associate déjà vu with precognition (Eranimos & Funkhouser, 2023). Consequently, the finding strengthens the argument that déjà vu reflects

cognitive limitation rather than epistemic access to future events, thereby reinforcing its classification as a perceptual anomaly rather than a knowledge-bearing experience.

The second finding, which links certain forms of déjà vu to prior dream experiences, offers a more complex interpretation of its temporal structure. While some psychological perspectives suggest that déjà vu may arise from the reactivation of dream fragments, this study demonstrates that such connections remain fundamentally retrospective. The meaning of the experience only emerges after real-world alignment, indicating a dependency on interpretive reconstruction rather than inherent predictive value. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary metacognitive conflict theory, which explains déjà vu as the brain's attempt to resolve discrepancies between perception and memory (Aždajić, 2024b; Shutaleva, 2023). Compared to earlier psychoanalytic accounts that attributed déjà vu to unconscious memory traces (Le Bon, 2025), recent empirical work emphasizes cognitive processing errors rather than symbolic meaning. The present study contributes to this debate by clarifying that dream-related déjà vu does not alter its epistemic status; instead, it reinforces its reliance on post hoc validation. This finding diverges from studies that suggest a quasi-precognitive dimension of dreams, arguing instead that such interpretations arise from cognitive bias rather than ontological reality. Therefore, the study refines existing theoretical frameworks by distinguishing between perceived anticipation and actual epistemic anticipation.

In contrast, the third finding highlights that ru'yā ṣādiqah represents a fundamentally different category of inner experience, characterized by prospective anticipation with epistemic certainty. Unlike déjà vu, which is grounded in cognitive processing, ru'yā ṣādiqah is situated within a theological framework that attributes its origin to divine communication. This aligns with classical Islamic epistemology, where knowledge can be derived not only from *العقل* (reason) and *حس* (sense perception) but also from revelation-based experiences (Erdoğan, 2024; Shani, 2025). The Qur'anic narratives analyzed in this study demonstrate that such dreams are not merely symbolic but directive, often requiring action and subsequently confirmed in reality. This supports interpretations by contemporary scholars who argue that ru'yā ṣādiqah functions as a form of epistemic extension beyond empirical cognition (Pezzini, 2023; Aždajić, 2024a). Compared to previous studies that primarily treat these dreams within theological boundaries, this research advances the discussion by situating them within a comparative epistemological framework. The finding thus contributes theoretically by redefining ru'yā ṣādiqah not only as a religious phenomenon but also as a structured model of anticipatory knowledge, distinct from cognitive illusion.

The fourth finding further elaborates the structured and symbolic nature of ru'yā ṣādiqah, particularly through the narrative of Prophet Yusuf. Unlike déjà vu, where meaning is constructed after the event, the symbolic elements in ru'yā ṣādiqah are shown to possess inherent coherence that unfolds progressively in alignment with reality. This reflects a semiotic structure in which symbols are not arbitrary but embedded within a predetermined system of meaning. Theoretically, this can be linked to hermeneutic approaches in Qur'anic exegesis, which emphasize the layered yet coherent nature of divine communication (Kaltsum & Amin, 2024; Rahman & Faizuddin, 2025). When compared to cognitive theories of memory reconstruction, the difference becomes more pronounced: while cognitive processes generate meaning retrospectively, ru'yā ṣādiqah operates within a framework of pre-established meaning. This finding both supports and extends prior Islamic scholarship by demonstrating that symbolic dreams are not merely interpretive but structurally anticipatory. At the same time, it challenges reductionist interpretations that attempt to equate religious experiences with psychological phenomena. Thus, the study contributes a nuanced understanding of symbolic anticipation as an epistemologically grounded process rather than a cognitive artifact.

The fifth finding underscores the temporal robustness of ru'yā ṣādiqah, particularly in cases where fulfillment is delayed yet remains certain. This introduces a critical distinction between immediacy and certainty, where delay does not diminish epistemic validity but instead reinforces it within a broader temporal framework. From a theoretical perspective, this aligns with Islamic concepts of divine knowledge, where time is not experienced linearly but encompasses both present and future realities (Loht, 2023; Aziz, 2025). In contrast, psychological models of déjà vu are constrained by real-time cognitive processing, limiting their explanatory scope to immediate perception. Empirical studies on predictive cognition do acknowledge anticipatory mechanisms, but these remain probabilistic and error-prone (Frankle, 2022; Gillinder et al., 2022). The present study

extends this discussion by introducing a non-probabilistic model of anticipation, where certainty is not derived from likelihood but from source. This represents a significant theoretical contribution, as it challenges the assumption that all anticipatory experiences must be explained within probabilistic frameworks. Consequently, the study positions ru'yā ṣādiqah as an alternative model of temporality that expands current understandings of anticipation.

The sixth finding synthesizes the comparative dimensions, demonstrating that the relationship between déjà vu and ru'yā ṣādiqah is best understood as phenomenological correspondence combined with epistemological divergence. While both phenomena produce a subjective sense of prior experience, their underlying structures, sources, and functions differ fundamentally. This supports interdisciplinary theories that caution against superficial analogies across knowledge systems (Barzykowski & Moulin, 2023; Perrin et al., 2024). At the same time, the study advances these discussions by proposing a structured analytical framework that distinguishes between experiential similarity and ontological difference. Compared to earlier studies that either separate or loosely compare these phenomena, this research offers a more rigorous model of integration. This contributes to filling a significant gap in the literature, where interdisciplinary comparisons often lack conceptual clarity. By doing so, the study provides a foundation for future research that seeks to bridge religious and scientific perspectives without collapsing their distinctions.

The final implication of this study lies in its contribution to both theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, it expands the discourse on inner experience by introducing a dual-framework model that accommodates both cognitive and theological interpretations. Practically, it offers a more nuanced understanding for educational, psychological, and religious contexts, where such experiences are often interpreted in isolation. The study also implicitly addresses limitations in current research, particularly the tendency to privilege empirical explanations while neglecting non-empirical epistemologies. By situating its findings within the global academic landscape, this research provides a novel perspective that enriches interdisciplinary dialogue. Furthermore, it challenges researchers to reconsider the boundaries of knowledge and the criteria for epistemic validity. In this sense, the study not only fills an existing research gap but also redefines the terms of engagement between psychology and theology.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the relationship between déjà vu and ru'yā ṣādiqah can be most accurately understood through a dual analytical lens that distinguishes phenomenological similarity from epistemological divergence. While both experiences generate a compelling sense of prior occurrence, their underlying structures reveal fundamentally different modes of knowledge production. Déjà vu emerges as a cognitively constructed experience shaped by familiarity signals, predictive processing, and memory misalignment, thereby positioning it within a framework of perceptual limitation and epistemic uncertainty. In contrast, ru'yā ṣādiqah is grounded in a theological epistemology in which anticipation is not probabilistic but truth-bearing, originating from a source that transcends empirical cognition. This distinction clarifies that similarity at the level of subjective experience does not imply equivalence at the level of meaning, origin, or validity. Consequently, the study rejects reductionist interpretations that attempt to subsume religious experiences within purely cognitive explanations, while also avoiding uncritical theological generalizations. Instead, it advances a balanced and conceptually rigorous framework that preserves the integrity of both domains.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the development of an interdisciplinary model that redefines anticipatory inner experience as a multidimensional construct rather than a unified phenomenon. By introducing the distinction between retrospective cognitive reconstruction and prospective epistemic certainty, the study extends existing psychological and theological theories and offers a new conceptual vocabulary for comparative analysis. It also addresses a critical gap in the literature by providing a structured methodology for engaging with phenomena that operate across different epistemological systems without collapsing their differences. Practically, the findings offer implications for scholars in psychology, religious studies, and education, particularly in interpreting experiences that are often misunderstood or

oversimplified. At the same time, the study acknowledges its limitations, including its reliance on textual and conceptual analysis without empirical validation, which opens avenues for future research integrating neuroscientific, phenomenological, and theological approaches. Ultimately, this study positions itself within the global academic discourse as a critical intervention that not only bridges disciplinary boundaries but also challenges prevailing assumptions about the nature of knowledge, experience, and reality.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Marsella conceptualized the study, developed the research framework, conducted the primary analysis, and drafted the manuscript. Endang Saeful Anwar contributed to the theoretical development, supervised the research process, and critically reviewed and refined the intellectual content of the manuscript. Hikmatul Luthfi assisted in data curation, supported the analytical process, and contributed to editing and finalizing the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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