mHealth Applications: Can User-adaptive Visualization and Context Affect the Perception of Security and Privacy?

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Abstract: Through mobile applications, patients and health professionals are able to access and monitor health data. But even with user-adaptive systems, which can adjust interface content according to individual's needs and context (e.g., physical location), data privacy can be at risk, as these techniques do not aim to protect them or even identify the presence of vulnerabilities. The main goal of this paper is to test with end-users the adaptive visualization techniques, together with the context where they are used, to understand how these may influence users' security perception, and decide which techniques can be applied to improve security and privacy of visualized data. An online survey was applied to test two different use-cases and contexts, where traditional access and access using visualization techniques are compared in terms of security characteristics. Preliminary results with 27 participants show that when accessing personal data from a patients' perspective, the context has higher influence in the perception of confidentiality (authorized access) and integrity (authorized modification) of visualized data while for a health professional's perspective, independently of the context, the visualization techniques are the ones that seem to primarily influence participants' choices for those security characteristics. For availability (data available to authorized users whenever necessary), both visualization techniques and context have little, or no influence, in the participants' choice.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mobile devices like smartphones or tablets are very useful to support user needs on the move (Burigat et al, 2008). Due to advancement of technologies such as computing and memory capability, Global Positioning Systems or intuitive and tactile graphical user interfaces, the latest generation of smartphones are progressively viewed as handheld computers (Boulos et al, 2011). These improvements on smartphones can increase the power of visualization to anytime, anywhere (Chittaro, 2006) to most computing application areas, such as medicine, engineering and science. Visualization can make a wide range of mobile applications more intuitive and productive by highlighting important aspects and hiding irrelevant details (Lapin, 2014), but finding the best solutions and techniques is a constant challenge (Burigat et al, 2008; Chittaro, 2006). There are various limitations, the most obvious one being the small screen size.

Visualization is not only a matter of information type and content. The way people interact with interfaces can affect information security and privacy. One very common example is when users access personal or sensitive data (e.g., home banking or personal medical records) on public busy places such as trains, airports or coffee shops. Anyone standing behind or beside that user can easily eavesdrop some or all information. Further, if all required and nonrequired (unnecessary) data at a specific moment is travelling via unsecure communication channels such as public non-secure Wi-Fi hotspots, those can be more exposed and easily eavesdropped by attackers. Adaptive visualization techniques are available to adapt visualization in small screens (Schwartze et al, 2010), however these were not tested in relation to security and privacy of visualized data.

The main goal of this paper is to test with endusers if adaptive graphical visualization techniques, together with the user's context of usage (type of device, location, connection and time), can be applied to improve security and privacy of visualized data. An

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Muchagata, J., Vieira-Marques, P. and Ferreira, A. mHealth Applications: Can User-adaptive Visualization and Context Affect the Perception of Security and Privacy?. DOI: 10.5220/0007724304440451 In Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems (ICEIS 2019), pages 444-451 ISBN: 978-989-758-372-8 Copyright © 2019 by SCITEPRESS – Science and Technology Publications, Lda. All rights reserved online survey was applied to test two use-cases where traditional access and access using those adaptive visualization techniques are compared in terms of security characteristics. Further, these are also analysed in two different scenarios.

2 ADAPTIVE GRAPHICAL VISUALIZATION INTERFACE (AGVI)

This paper focuses on identifying the importance of a user-adaptive system where graphical interface and information visualization can be adapted to support users showing detailed results for a specific situation according to their individual needs (Lapin, 2014; Schwartze et al, 2010; Yelizarov and Gamayunov, 2014). Traditionally, information visualization systems ignored user's needs, abilities and preferences and followed a one-size-fits-all model (Steichen et al, 2013). Ideally, visualization techniques must take into account users' characteristics such as type of device, location, type of connection, time as well as security aspects. Usually the mobile screen has limited space, and thus it is a challenge to identify how much and what information should be displayed, what the user really needs to see and find a convenient way to present it. A significant effort has been made to study different representations and navigation techniques, especially for large documents which are used in desktop systems (Lapin, 2014). A few studies (Burigat et al, 2008; Chittaro, 2006; Lapin, 2014) have shown techniques to adapt solutions originally designed for desktop, namely (Muchagata and Ferreira, 2018):

- Restructuring of the information space this method transforms a multi-column layout into a one-column layout; in some cases, the navigation structure may change significantly and it may be difficult for users to take full advantage of their experience.
- Scrolling and panning techniques the space is scrolled horizontally and vertically and also part of the space is panned out in any direction; the screen contains part of the information space.
- Zooming effective method to scale the information space and can be used to get several perspectives; objects can change size and shape or they can appear and disappear from the visualization space when zoomed.

- Overview and detail approaches provides two simultaneous views, one for context and one for detail; the context view highlights part of the displayed space in the detail, with a rectangular viewfinder.
- Focus and context approaches the best example of this technique is the fish-eye view which increases objects of the user's focal attention and gradually decreases the size of more distant objects.

Each of these methods has advantages but at the same time may be related to security problems. The three main security characteristics: Confidentiality, Integrity, Availability (CIA) can be compromised in some situations.

3 METHODS

In order to demonstrate the application of AGVI, two use-cases are presented where it is compared two different situations and analyse how the user and context characteristics (e.g., physical location) can influence the way information is visualized and the level of security in a specific moment. AGVI techniques are used from the recommendation list previously synthesized by two of the authors (Muchagata and Ferreira, 2018). The visual/graphical interface is adapted to the specific needs, characteristics and context of the user during visualization in real-time. In addition to the visual part, the information content available is also dependent on the characteristics mentioned above.

The use-cases are based on two fictional mobile Electronic Health Records (EHR) apps. In Use-Case A, the user is a patient who needs to visualize health records at a pharmacy using a mobile device with the app *MyHealth*. Use-Case B describes a mobile app called *iMedicine* used by a doctor when searching for her patients' records (Sub-section 3.1). The authors conducted an online survey to verify the perception of security within the presented scenarios (Sub-section 3.2).

3.1 Use-Cases

3.1.1 Use-Case A

Paulo is a patient and he is at a pharmacy during lunch time but there is a very long queue. While he is waiting, he is using his smartphone and trying to sign in through the app where he has the information about all his medical records, including medication, appointments, prescriptions, lab results and allergies.

He needs to see in the system the last prescription made by his doctor to check for allergies to a specific medication (Figures 1 and 2) (Muchagata and Ferreira, 2018).



Figure 1: Before using the AGVI, Paulo, the patient, is able to see everything available about his medical records without considering all the involved risks.

The mHealth app analyses Paulo's characteristics: device (smartphone), location (pharmacy/public place), connection (public open Wi-Fi) and time (lunch time). Paulo connects to the pharmacy free Wi-Fi network so he does not need to authenticate. This is considered to be a high security risk connection. As Paulo is in a pharmacy the system only provides the items related with "Medication" and "Prescriptions" (Figure 2).



Figure 2: After using the AGVI the app shows information according with user's characteristics and needs with improved visual security.

If for some reason Paulo needs more information he can access it through the icon on the upper left corner "+info". When he chooses the option

"Prescriptions" the system shows him the most recent one. At this stage, visualization techniques from Section 2 are applied. The technique *Restructuring* of the information space can be used to adjust the information content to the smartphone's screen space. Also, Focus and context approaches, the fish-eye technique, is available. This is useful if Paulo needs to see part of the information in more detail. But at the same time, it can also increase the risk of "shoulder surfing" and compromise confidentiality. Thus, when using the fish-eye technique the system uses a timer for restricting the duration of zooming moments in contexts of high security risk (in this case, 5 seconds). Therefore, if the time is limited, the risk of privacy and security exposure will be reduced.

3.1.2 Use-case B

Dr. Luísa is a medical doctor at Hospital de São João in Porto. After her shift she goes to a coffee shop to meet a friend around 4pm. Already in the place she receives a call from a co-worker with some doubts about a patient. Her colleague needs help to confirm some diagnostic in an x-ray exam. Dr. Luísa has her smartphone with her so she accesses the app with her doctor's credentials. She is using the free Wi-Fi network from the coffee shop so it is a high security risk connection. She signs into the app and she searches for the patient's exam result. Again, without the AGVI she is able to see everything: her profile, her patients, messages, appointments of the day and her agenda. After choosing the patients' icon she can see the list of all her patients and select the patient she needs to see the exam (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Before using the AGVI Dr. Luísa is able to see everything about her profile, patient's information, messages, appointments and agenda.

On the other hand, with AGVI, the visualization and related security are different. In this case Dr. Luísa just sees two menu icons and if she chooses the "patients" option (for security purposes), she needs to type the patient's name. Then it is possible to see the exam with no other identifiable patient information to protect their privacy (Figure 4). In this case, a visualization technique from Section 2 is also applied. The technique *Overview and detail approaches* is used to highlight a specific part of the exam that was mentioned by her colleague (third image right in Figure 4). At all times she can access more detailed information by selecting the "+info" icon (Muchagata and Ferreira, 2018).



Figure 4: After using the AGVI, the app shows information according to user's most common accessed contents (e.g. patients and appointments of the day), user's characteristics and needs, together with improved visual security.

3.2 Exploratory Tests

The type of test most appropriate for this study, at this stage, is the exploratory test because it is often conducted as a comparison test by comparing two or more designs, such as two different interface scenarios, to see which has the greatest potential with our target group (Rubin and Chisnell, 2008). The main goal is to understand and evaluate the target opinions in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of different designs regarding the confidentiality, integrity and availability of healthcare sensitive data. The authors intend to analyse which alternative is the favourite one and, possibly, the factors associated to this choice.

Thus, an online survey was organized through the *LimeSurvey* website and due to the nature of the study the authors selected a convenience sample more targeted to an academic group. The survey was made available during the month of August and beginning of September of 2018. The use-case images are in English (Sub-section 3.1) but they were translated to Portuguese because the survey was taken in Portugal. The online survey was structured into four parts:

 Part 1 - Free and informed consent to participate in this study

Description of the study and goals, average of duration time and information about confidentiality and anonymity.

Part 2 - Demographic data

Year of birth; Gender; Academic skills; Occupation; Use of smartphones and mobile applications in healthcare; Privacy and security in mobile healthcare applications.

Part 3 - Scenarios (Use-case A and B)

Scenario 1 (Use-case A) corresponds to a patient's perspective and it is divided in two parts. Each part is composed by three pairs of images and each pair comprehends one "before" using the AGVI and one "after" using the AGVI (e.g., Figure 1 (a) is paired with Figure 2 (a); Figure 1 (b) is paired with Figure 2 (b), and so on). In the first part the identification of the context is identified (e.g., Figure 1 (a) is paired with Figure 2 (b), and so on). In the first part the identification of the context is identified (e.g., Figure 1 (a) is paired with Figure 2 (a) and the user is accessing the app at Home; and Figure 1 (a) is paired with Figure 2 (a) while the user is accessing the app at the Pharmacy).

In its turn, scenario 2 (Use-case B) is the doctor's perspective and it is very similar to scenario 1 but with different images' content and contexts (home and coffee shop).

The idea in both scenarios is to analyse the participants' perspective about which of the two images guarantees the highest degree of the three main characteristics of security: confidentiality, integrity and availability.

Part 4 - Final observations

Space where participants can leave comments and opinions about the survey's content.

For the statistical treatment of the data SPSS Statistics version 24 was used.

4 **RESULTS**

Our survey was answered by 27 individuals, aged between 18 and 45 years old, with the majority of participants (67%) between the age of 18 and 30 years old and 33% between 31 and 50. The sample consisted of 11 males and 16 females. The majority of participants have higher education n=24 (89%) and in terms of professional occupation they were organized as follows: students and researchers n = 13(48%), senior technicians n=5 (19%), health professionals n=5 (19%) and others n=4 (15%). This last group includes people who are retired, unemployed, or people who didn't specify their occupation.

Due to the generalization of smartphones and the variety of applications available today, through the survey the authors tried to analyse how people use smartphones and mobile applications in healthcare. Therefore, and according with our results to the question "How often do you use a smartphone?", the majority of participants n=24 (89%) uses a smartphone on a daily basis; n=9 (33%) revealed that they never use mHealth apps and just n=1 (4%) uses those apps several times a day.

The answers related with the question "How often do you allow the applications you install to access your contacts, photos, location, and other personal information?" revealed that most of them allow it to happen: n=6 (22%) chose the option "Sometimes", n=8 (30%) said "Very often" and n=5 (19%) allow this to "Always" happen. Only a minority of n=3(11%) said that they never allow this to happen. This minority was composed by n=2 (7%) males and n=1(4%) female; n=2 (7%) between 31 and 50 years old and n=1 (4%) between 18 and 30 years old; n=2 (7%) senior technicians and n=1 (4%) in the others group.

Regarding the degree of importance given to privacy and security in mHealth applications, the following question was presented to our participants: "In your opinion, how important is privacy and security in mHealth applications?". The answerers of our participants were "Important" with n=2 (7%), "Very important" with n=13 (48%) and "Extremely important" with n=12 (44%).

Tables 1 and 2 show the opinion of our participants related with confidentiality, integrity and availability. The definitions used for these terms were as follows:

 Confidentiality - The access to information is exclusively limited to authorized persons and entities.

- Integrity Information should only be changed/modified by authorized persons or entities.
- *Availability* Information must be accessible to authorized persons whenever necessary.

Tables 1 & 2 are organized as follows: "Screen" corresponds to the type of content visualized by the participants in each pair of images (one without AGVI - "Figure 1" and the other with AGVI -"Figure 2", "Menu" is the application menu; Sensitive data - technique 1 and 2 correspond to the visualization techniques applied in each case; "Context of usage provided" refers to the analysis of the images in the first place without context "No" and in second place with context "Yes"; "Figure 1" represents the figures with all the content available independently of the user's characteristics (type of device, location, connection and time), and "Figure 2" includes the figures with the visualization techniques applied and so the user can just see what is relevant at that specific moment.

Regarding Patient Data (Table 1), and beginning with the analysis of confidentiality, the participants select "Figure 2" as being the one that ensures a higher degree of confidentiality. When presenting the same images accompanied by context ("Figure 1" home and "Figure 2" - pharmacy) small differences could be noticed, however "Figure 2" remains in participants' opinion as the one that offers a greater degree of confidentiality. In terms of integrity, Image 2 is mostly chosen independently from the context, apart from Figure 2 (a) – Menu, that is less chosen when the context is present. In the case of availability, "Image 1" was chosen by all (independently of the context) as the one that shows more availability of patient data.

In its turn, and in the doctor's scenario, Table 2 demonstrates that "Figure 4" guarantees a higher level of confidentiality when compared with "Figure 3". Relatively to the integrity of data, most participants chose "Figure 4", apart from Figure 4 (a) – Menu, the most chosen for integrity with context but less chosen when context is not present. Regarding data availability, as it happens for the patient's perspective scenario, "Figure 1" is always considered as the one which offers more availability of patient data.

		Confidentiality		Integrity		Availability	
		Figure 1	Figure 2	Figure 1	Figure 2	Figure 1	Figure 2
Screen	Context of usage provided	Fig. 1 (a)	Fig. 2 (a)	Fig. 1 (a)	Fig. 2 (a)	Fig. 1 (a)	Fig. 2 (a)
Menu	No	9 (33%)	18 (67%)	9 (33%)	18 (67%)	24 (89%)	3 (11%)
	Yes	6 (22%)	21 (78%)	15 (56%)	12 (44%)	24 (89%)	3 (11%)
Screen	Context of usage provided	Fig. 1 (b)	Fig. 2 (b)	Fig. 1 (b)	Fig. 2 (b)	Fig. 1 (b)	Fig. 2 (b)
Sensitive data technique 1	No	7 (26%)	20 (74%)	13 (48%)	14 (52%)	22 (82%)	5 (19%)
	Yes	10 (37%)	17 (63%)	17 (63%)	10 (37%)	23 (85%)	4 (15%)
Screen	Context of usage provided	Fig. 1 (c)	Fig. 2 (c)	Fig. 1 (c)	Fig. 2 (c)	Fig. 1 (c)	Fig. 2 (c)
Sensitive data technique 2	No	5 (19%)	22 (82%)	15 (56%)	12 (44%)	23 (85%)	4 (15%)
	Yes	9 (33%)	18 (67%)	15 (56%)	12 (44%)	24 (89%)	3 (11%)

Table 1: Scenario 1 - Patient's Perspective (confidentiality, integrity and availability).

Table 2: Scenario 2 – Doctor's Perspective (confidentiality, integrity and availability).

		Confidentiality		Integrity		Availability	
	<	Figure 3	Figure 4	Figure 3	Figure 4	Figure 3	Figure 4
Screen	Context of usage provided	Fig. 3 (a)	Fig. 4 (a)	Fig. 3 (a)	Fig. 4 (a)	Fig. 3 (a)	Fig. 4 (a)
Menu	No	8 (30%)	19 (70%)	12 (44%)	15 (56%)	22 (82%)	5 (19%)
	Yes	13 (48%)	14 (52%)	18 (67%)	9 (33%)	22 (82%)	5 (19%)
Screen	Context of usage provided	Fig. 3 (b)	Fig. 4 (b)	Fig. 3 (b)	Fig. 4 (b)	Fig. 3 (b)	Fig. 4 (b)
Sensitive data technique 1	No	3 (11%)	24 (89%)	8 (30%)	19 (70%)	15 (56%)	12 (44%)
	Yes	3 (11%)	24 (89%)	11 (41%)	16 (60%)	18 (67%)	9 (33%)
Screen	Context of usage provided	Fig. 3 (c)	Fig. 4 (c)	Fig. 3 (c)	Fig. 4 (c)	Fig. 3 (c)	Fig. 4 (c)
Sensitive data technique 2	No	2 (7%)	25 (93%)	9 (33%)	18 (67%)	21 (78%)	6 (22%)
	Yes	5 (19%)	22 (82%)	10 (37%)	17 (63%)	19 (70%)	8 (30%)

5 DISCUSSION

Our study shows the complexity in analysing various variables connected with human behaviour. The authors addressed issues such as perception of security and privacy, adaptable visualization as well as the context to try to understand the best way to provide data in mobile applications. Following a previous work (Muchagata and Ferreira, 2018) where a set of visualization techniques were analysed in terms of their potential effect on the confidentiality, integrity and privacy of mobile data content, this study advances the state of the art by exploring how the perceptions of real users are affected depending on the content and on the adoption of visualization techniques to present that content to the user.

Regardless if the participants represent doctors or patients (or even both), the authors considered relevant and appropriate to know their opinions and perspectives when they place themselves in both scenarios.

For the patient's scenario, and in terms of confidentiality, every time a particular context is presented, some participants change their opinion on what image's content provides a higher degree of confidentiality. Commonly in the first image regarding the menu selection, participants change their opinion to think that confidentiality is higher when choosing from a menu when they are at a pharmacy than when they are at home. Maybe this is explained by the fact that the type of data they are accessing relates to health information, which can be commonly more sensitive. However, when asked the same question regarding the third image which includes the results of their search, when the context is presented, participants change their opinion that Figure 1 (the one with more personal data content), at home, is the most secure in terms of confidentiality. This may be because this information is more related to the patient's personal (specific medication) data and so visualizing this data at home can certainly feel more secure and trustworthy.

In terms of integrity, for the same patient's scenario, answers reveal that there is a big change for the menu image when there is no context and when the context is present. Participants favour Figure 2 (the one with less content and visualization techniques) without the context, but once the context is presented they change their opinion to favour Figure 1 (the one with more detailed content and without visualization techniques) that is viewed at home. The same happens to the subsequent image where content is searched. Regarding integrity, the most chosen secure visualization content is the one

with more detail and viewed at home. What are the factors that trigger this change? The authors believe that since integrity is at stake, the more information and detail available from the searched content, the better (although this can be confused with availability) but is not the same for the steps that lead to search for that data, such as in choosing from menus. For all options regarding integrity, being at home is considered safer and more trustworthy than in a public place.

In terms of availability, participants' responses are very consistent and do not change whether context is present or not. This is also true for the doctor's scenario. The visualization content mostly chosen for availability is Figure 3, which understandably always comprises the most detailed and complete data, even though in some cases it could not be considered the most secure option.

In relation to the doctor's scenario, there are some differences in terms of confidentiality. In this case, there is no variation in the participants' choice as Figure 4, the ones with the applied visualization techniques (and therefore with less and more focused content), are always chosen. For the doctor's scenario the context does not interfere with the perception of security and privacy unless the content is the menu of choices (the first image in the sequence), so for all others it seems that the applied visualization techniques have, alone, an impact in that choice. For integrity in this same scenario, there is a similar change from Figure 4 to Figure 3 for the menu option, but here, for the other two images, the most chosen ones in the doctor's scenario are the ones with visualization techniques, and not the ones with more detailed content, as for the patients' results. There are just small variations when context is present. Again, it seems apparent that when a health professional is accessing confidential data the perception of security for the surveyed participants is that patient data should be more controlled and contained than when it is a patient accessing that data, even if that access is performed at a public place, such as a coffee shop. Here the context "home" is not the one providing a higher sense of trust and integrity, visualization techniques seem to override that.

Limitations. Despite encountering a few examples of the use of adaptive visualization techniques in mobile applications, the authors could not find a clear and detailed methodology and procedures that could help with their implementation in practice, especially within the fields of security and privacy. Also, this study had time and management constraints with the application of the online questionnaire within the holiday period, the month of August and beginning of September, and the change of questionnaires appliance in relation to the new European legislation regarding personal data, which is for the moment halted by the University management. Therefore, the authors had a small turnover of responses and a small sample to analyse and were not able to adequately compare results with demographic variables.

Also, for the analysis of the doctor's perspective, only a small part of the participants were health professionals (n=5 - 19%). As such, it can be harder for a non-health professional to evaluate how a certain system and related sensitive data content must or not be protected.

However, these constitute preliminary results that can be further detailed with a wider application of the same questionnaire, as it is ready for use, as soon as management constraints are lifted. The authors believe that these are important first steps in understanding the subject at hand. For being small, the sample is not varied in participants' background or age but balanced in terms of gender.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a first overview on the influence that context and adaptive visualization techniques can have on the users' perception regarding security and privacy of mHealth applications. Due to the complexity of human behaviour and human computer interactions, more focus on this line of research is needed.

The authors conclude that both context and adaptive visualization techniques can influence mHealth users' perspectives on security and privacy but add also that, consequently, the roles (e.g., patient or health professional) and goals (e.g., searching for a medication or a patient and analyse exams) used to interact with the applications can also come into play and add to the complexity and relevance of this subject.

With this in mind, a more complete/detailed analysis and with a wider and more diverse sample needs to be performed to better understand the factors and requirements to design more secure and privacy compliant mHealth applications.

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