



Geoelectrical Investigation of Soils as Foundation Materials in Umudike Area, Southeastern Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author CAU designed the study, while author GUC wrote the protocol. Authors CAU and EUN wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author EUN led in the field investigation. Author CAU managed the literature searches, authors GUC and CAU carried out the geophysical data analysis. Author EUN led carried the laboratory analyses. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Geoelectrical investigation of soils in Umudike area of Abia State was undertaken in order to determine the competence of the soils as foundation materials. A total of 18 Vertical Electrical Sounding (VES), using Schlumberger configuration was carried out. The results revealed three to six distinct geoelectric sequences with resistivities ranging from about 8 Ωm to about 38,000 Ωm and a variation in topsoil thicknesses with the least as 0.2 m at vicinity of VES Station 2 Ahiaeke and the highest as 5.0 m at VES Station 14 MOUAU. The topsoils are composed of sands, silts, sandy clays, clays and laterites. The study also revealed the cause of frequent cracking and collapse of a portion of the Umuahia-Ikot-Ekpene road. Based on the results of the survey, the most competent soils within which large civil engineering structures will be founded within the study area are encountered at VES 8,9 (inside ABSUPAC), 6 (opposite GCU), 14 and 15 (inside MOUAU).

Keywords: Competent soils; electrical resistivity; foundation failure; geoelectric layer.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of shallow geophysical methods of investigation in civil and construction engineering for road and building construction and evaluation, dam safety and solution of related problems; engineering and environmental geophysics is defined as geotechnical geophysics by Sheriff [1].

High rising buildings are among large civil engineering structures that are subjected to strong dynamic and static loads; and since the statistics of failures of building structures throughout the nation has increased geometrically; therefore the design and construction should be preceded by adequate investigation in order to prevent such failures. These failures have been attributed to a number of factors such as inadequate information about the soil and the subsurface geological material, poor foundation design and poor building materials.

The need for pre-foundation studies is therefore necessary in order to prevent loss of valuable lives and properties that always accompany such failure.

Foundation study usually provides subsurface information that normally assists civil engineers in designing the foundation of civil engineering structures. This is because some earth materials due to their nature cannot support solid and rigid structures; among these materials are clays and clay-bearing earth.

Similarly, earth materials such as sands and fresh basement rock provide firm support for solid foundation.

To this end, geophysical methods together with or besides other geotechnical approaches are routinely used for foundation investigation as studied by Ajayi [2], Akinrinmade [3], Akintorinwa [4], Tabwassah and Obiefuna [5].

Geophysical methods such as the Electrical Resistivity (ER), Seismic Refraction, Electromagnetic (EM), Magnetic and Ground Penetrating Radar are used singly or in combinations for engineering site investigation as studied by Olorunfemi and Meshida [6], Fatoba [7], Hunter [8], Melikan [9], Olorunfemi [10,11], Oluwakemi and Michael [12]. The applications of

such geophysical investigation are in the determination of layer thickness, depth to bedrock, structural mapping and evaluation of subsoil competence.

The need to provide information in the subsurface sequence and structure disposition necessary for foundation design necessitated a geoelectrical investigation of the soils of Umudike area and environs as foundation materials.

Geologically, there are about 11 different formations in Abia State of Nigeria and the selected study area (Umudike and its environs) falls within the transition zone of Ogwashi Formation and Coastal plain sands as indicated by Geological survey [13] (Fig. 1).

Within a transition zone, there are at times abrupt or gradual changes in lithology; therefore a complex overall situation with respect to defining the competence of near-surface formation as foundation materials could arise in future as a result of attempts in the construction of high rising buildings.

Ogwashi Formation and Coastal Plain Sands are situated in the Cenozoic Niger Delta Basin.

The Cenozoic Niger Delta is situated at the intersection of the Benue Trough and the South Atlantic Ocean where triple-R junction (rift system) developed during the break-up of Gondwana leading to the separation of the continents of South America and Africa in the Late Jurassic. The third arm of the rift after extending to about 1000 km northeast from the Gulf of Guinea to Lake Chad failed (aulacogen), thus forming the Benue Trough as indicated by Stoneley [14].

Subsequently sediments from weathering of the basement uplift were deposited into the trough through rivers and lakes by Early Cretaceous as shown by Murat [15]. By Mid-Cretaceous onwards Marine sedimentation took place in the Benue Trough; thus making it possible in conjunction with other geologic events for it to be presently underlain by diverse sedimentary basins.

The Benue Trough is arbitrarily divided into the Lower, the Middle and the Upper Benue Trough; and by Santonian times the area underwent intense folding and compression forming many anticlines and synclines.

After the Santonian-Campanian tectonism which formed the Abakiliki anticlinorium, the western margin of the Lower Benue Trough subsided, and the corresponding synclinorium became the Anambra basin where over 2500 m of deltaic complexes accumulated. However by Eocene, the inception of Tertiary Niger Delta Basin commenced. Thus, the Late Cretaceous deltaic sedimentation in the Anambra Basin was followed by the shift in deltaic deposition southward and consequently the construction or outbuilding of the Niger Delta took place. Hospers [16] showed that the interplay between subsidence and deposition arising from a succession of sea transgressions and regressions gave rise to the deposition of three lithostratigraphic units in the Niger Delta as indicated by Short and Stauble [17]. These units are Marine Akata Formation, Paralic Agbada Formation, and the Continental Benin Formation. The delta has prograded a distance greater than 250 km from the Benin and Calabar flanks to the present delta front. Average thickness of sediments in the Niger-Delta is about 12,000 m with an area of about 140,000 km² as indicated by Obaje [18].

Ogwashi Formation was grouped as the upper member of the Ameki (Agbada Group) Formation by Short and Stauble [17]. In the grouping, the coastal plain sands of Reymont [19] were referred to as Benin formation (Table 1).

While Amajor [20] grouped the Ogwashi Formation as the lower member of the Benin Formation, and the coastal plain sands as the upper member (Table 2).

Ogwashi Formation is predominantly sandy with alternating lignite seams and a few beds of clay with sparse marine fauna as indicated by Reymont [18]; Short and Stauble [17].

The Coastal plain sands are predominantly yellow and white sands alternating with pebbly layers and a few clay beds as studied by Reymont [18].

The formation comprises of shale/sand sediments with intercalation of thin clay beds as shown by Asseez [21]; Murat [15].

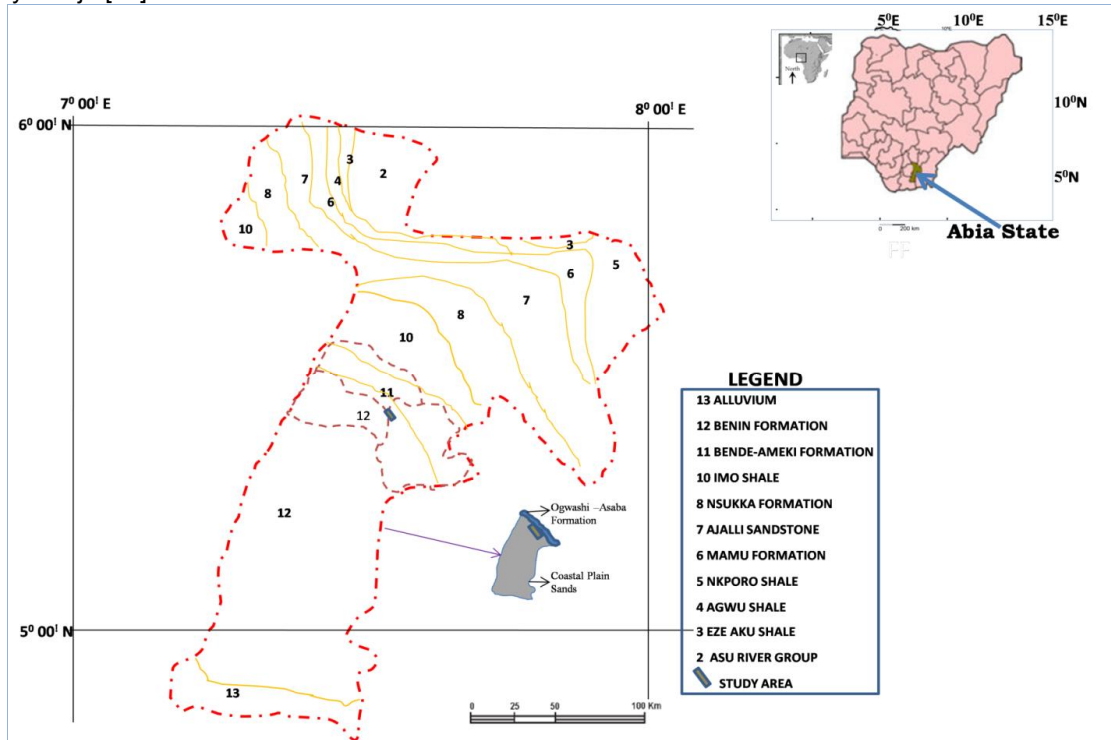


Fig. 1. Geologic map of Abia State of Nigeria showing the study area (Modified after GSN, 1985)

Table 1. Stratigraphic correlation chart of eastern Niger Delta outcrops and their subsurface equivalents (Short and Stauble, 1967)

Subsurface		Surface outcrops			
Youngest known age	Oldest known age	Youngest known age	Oldest known age		
Recent	Benin formation Afam shale member	Oligocene	Plio/pleistocene	Benin formation	Miocene?
Recent	Agbada formation	Eocene	Miocene	Ogwashi-asaba formation	Oligocene
			Eocene	Ameki formation	Eocene
Recent	Akata formation	Eocene	L. eocene	Imo shale formation	Paleocene
			Paleocene	Nsukka fm	Maestrichtian
			maestrichtian	Ajali formation	Maestrichtian
			Campanian	Mamu formation	Campanian
	Equivalents not known		Camp/maest.	Nkporo shale	Santonian
			Coniacian/santonian	Awgu shale	Turonian
			Turonian	Eze aku shale	Turonian
			Albian	Asu river group	Albian

Table 2. Stratigraphic correlation chart of the Niger Delta (After Amajor, 1986)

Age	Surface outcrop equivalent formations	Subsurface formations	Mega-depositional environments
Pliocene-recent	Coastal plain sands		Paralic continental
Miocene-recent	Ogwashi-asaba FM	Ijebu FM Benin FM	Continental delta plain
Eocene-recent	Ameki FM	Ilaro FM Oshoshun FM AFAM CLAY MBR.	Paralic delta front
Paleocene-recent	Imo fm	Ewekoro FM	Marine prodelta
Campanian-Maastrichtian-Maastrichtian-santonian	Nsukka FM Ajali sst Mamu FM Nkporo-enugu shale	Akata FM	Upper cretaceous pro niger delta successions

The sands are mostly medium to coarse grained, pebbly, moderately sorted with local lenses of poorly cemented sands and clays. Petrographic analysis studied by Onyeagocha [22] shows that the composition of the rocks is as follows: 95-99% Quartz grains, 1-2.5% of Na+K-mica.

The selected study area (Umudike and its environs) is located within the central parts of Ikwuano-Umuahia area; and lies within latitudes 5°28.793' N and 5°34.661' N, and longitudes 7°31.602' E and 7°34.661' E (Fig 2).

Climate of the area is the sub-equatorial climatic belt with tropical rain-forest vegetation. The mean annual temperature is between 24°C and 27°C; while the annual rainfall varies between 1500 mm and 3500 mm as presented by Adeleke and Leong [23].

Institutions and research centres such as Forestry Research Institute, New Industrial Market, Soil and Water Department of Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Government College Umuahia (GCU) are situated within the study area.

Others are Abia State University Practical Agricultural Campus (ABSUPAC), National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) and Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUUAU).

The area is witnessing rapid increase in population and subsequently expansion in infrastructure. It is known that rapid industrialization, urbanization and population growth have attendant pressure on all sustainable resources.

This has led to many geophysical groundwater investigations in the area as indicated by the studies of Mbonu [24], Chukwu [25], and Amos-Uhegbu [26]; but not much have been done in the area of foundation investigations.

The land is fixed but there is daily increase in infrastructure. Also, the reduction in available land due to increasing infrastructure will eventually give rise to the need of optimally using the available ones for sustainable practices.

In light of this, Umudike area and its environs are gradually being faced with the consequent attempts in the construction of high rising buildings.

It is therefore essential to assess the foundation competence of the near-surface soil and subsurface geological materials.

2. METHODOLOGY

The instruments used in the geoelectrical survey include resistivity meter (ABEM SAS 4000 Terrameter), Geographic Positioning System (GPS), 12Volts heavy duty motor battery with two connecting wires with crocodile clips, four hammers and four electrodes with rolls of wire, two rolls of 100 m rope each, Three rods for ropes (one central and two end ones), One big umbrella for shade, Data sheets with K-values and writing pen.

Six traverses were established across the study area (Fig. 3). Three (3) Vertical Electrical Sounding (VES) stations were occupied along each of the traverses and a total of 18 soundings were carried out using the Schlumberger electrode configuration of maximum half current electrodes spacing (AB/2) of 65 m (Table 3, Fig. 4).

The 12 V direct current (DC) served as current source to the Terrameter, and the current was passed into the subsurface through the two current electrodes 'AB'; while the two potential electrodes 'MN' were linearly arranged along the survey line to determine the ground potential difference (Fig. 4).

The resultant ratio of the current and voltage is the measured data which is the ground resistance read off in the Terrameter.

This ground resistance is used in computing the apparent resistivity using the corresponding k-values with the formula:

$$\rho_a = kR \quad (1)$$

where ρ_a = Apparent resistivity, $k = \pi \left(\frac{l^2 - l'^2}{2l} \right) =$ Geometric factor, R = Resistance in ohms
 $L = AB/2 =$ Half current electrode spacing (m), $l' = MN/2 =$ Half potential electrode spacing (m).

Substituting the values of k into equation (1), we get

$$\rho_a = \pi R \left(\frac{l^2 - l'^2}{2l} \right) \quad (2)$$

The apparent resistivity values were plotted against electrode spacing (AB/2) on a bi-logarithmic graph sheet to generate depth sounding curves. The curves were then inspected visually for identification of the curve types; and subsequently used for the conventional partial curve matching technique and use of auxiliary point diagrams as was done by Zohdy [27]. From the result, estimates of the resistivity and thickness of the various geoelectric layers were obtained and used for computer iteration using RESIST version 1.0 software of Vander – Velpen [28].

Finally, interpreted results were used for the analysis of sounding curves and preparation of geoelectric sections.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Analysis of Sounding Curve

Table and curves for vertical electrical sounding over layered structures is a function of the electrode configuration together with the resistivities and thicknesses of the layers as shown by Orellana and Mooney [29], Zohdy [27]; and Amos-Uhegbu [30]. Sounding (VES) curves are obtained by plotting the calculated apparent resistivity against the corresponding half current electrode separation (AB/2) and the letters Q,A,K and H are used to indicate the variation of resistivity with depth (Fig. 5).

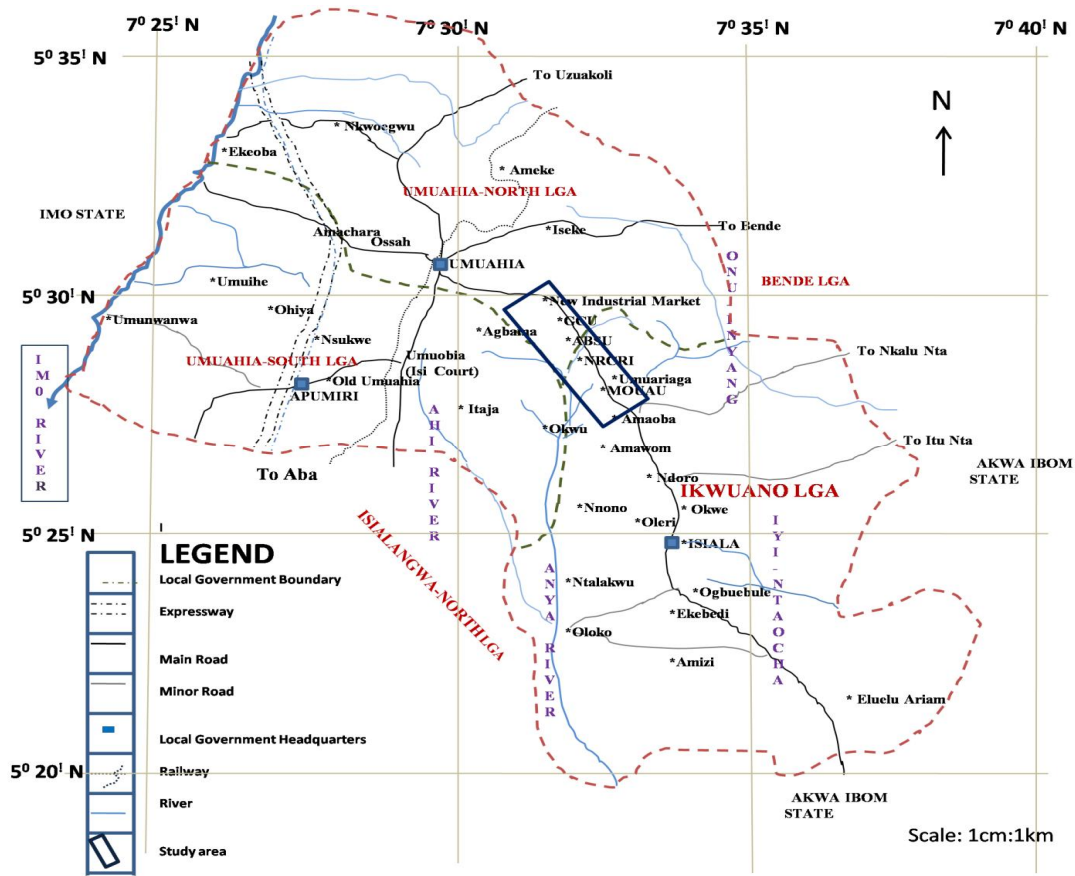


Fig. 2. Map of Ikwuano-Umuahia area of Abia State showing the study area

Table 3. VES stations and their localities in the study area

Data number	Data location	GPS reading		
		Elevation (m) a.m.s.l	Latitude°N	Longitude °E
1	Umuohu-Azueke (Ministry of Agriculture)	186.5	5°34.623 ¹ N	7°34.661 ¹ E
2	Umuohu-Azueke (New Industrial Market)	135.4	5°30.558 ¹ N	7°32.004 ¹ E
3	Umuohu-Azueke (New Industrial Market)	148.9	5°30.318 ¹ N	7°31.602 ¹ E
4	Umuohu-Azueke (GCU)	131.5	5°30.134 ¹ N	7°32.233 ¹ E
5	Umuohu-Azueke (GCU)	151.2	5°30.070 ¹ N	7°32.268 ¹ E
6	Umuohu-Azueke (Igbugbo Opposite GCU)	162.5	5°34.645 ¹ N	7°32.564 ¹ E
7	Umudike (Ihiuzo American Quarters Plantation)	147.0	5°29.560 ¹ N	7°32.323 ¹ E
8	Umuohu-Azueke (ASUPAC)	137.9	5°28.645 ¹ N	7°33.721 ¹ E
9	Umuohu-Azueke (Behind ASUPAC)	123.0	5°29.732 ¹ N	7°32.334 ¹ E
10	Umudike (Behind NRCRI)	98.3	5°28.877 ¹ N	7°32.411 ¹ E
11	Umudike (Inside NRCRI)	107.5	5°28.859 ¹ N	7°32.432 ¹ E
12	Umudike (V.C'S Lodge)	126.3	5°29.312 ¹ N	7°32.761 ¹ E
13	Umuariaga (Opposite MOUAU)	129.4	5°28.881 ¹ N	7°33.052 ¹ E
14	Umudike (Inside MOUAU)	113.3	5°28.793 ¹ N	7°32.433 ¹ E
15	Umudike (Behind MOUAU)	159.3	5°29.521 ¹ N	7°32.445 ¹ E
16	Amaoba	199.4	5°29.421 ¹ N	7°32.445 ¹ E
17	Amaoba	172.7	5°29.633 ¹ N	7°32.544 ¹ E
18	Amaoba	190.1	5°29.655 ¹ N	7°32.632 ¹ E

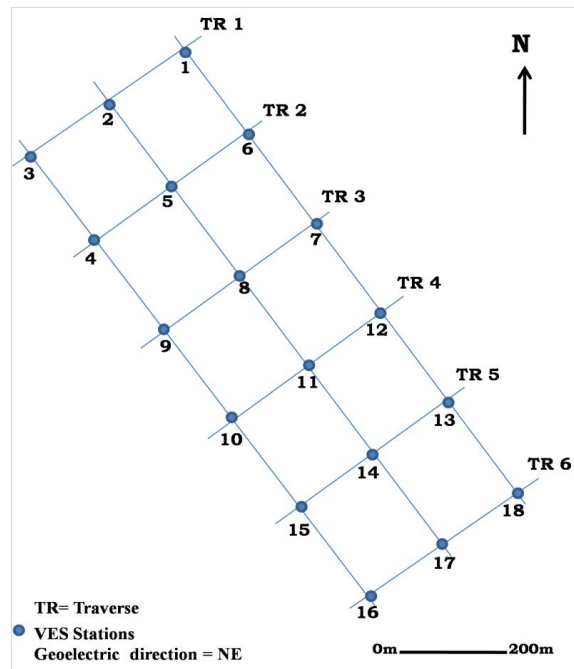


Fig. 3. Data acquisition grid of the study area showing the vertical electrical sounding stations

Fourteen curve types were identified within the study area and the number of layers varies between three layers and six layers with five-layered type curves predominant.

Resistivity type curves for some locations in the study area are as displayed (Fig. 6 to Fig. 9). While, Table 4 is a profile of the VES data and location points in the study area.

3.2 Geoelectric Sections of the Study Area

Subsurface resistivity is related to the physical property of interest such as lithology, porosity, water content etc; therefore electrical resistivity measurements determine subsurface resistivity distributions thereby differentiating layers based on resistivity values as studied by Ako [31], Amos-Uhegbu [30].

Zohdy [27] indicated that sounding curves obtained over a horizontally stratified medium could be presented as a descriptive profile displaying variation of apparent resistivity with depth. The profile is a scale drawing of the successive layer resistivities and thicknesses; so, a geoelectric section is a profile displaying variation of apparent resistivity with depth (Figs. 10, 11, and 12).

3.3 Subsurface Engineering Evaluation of the Study Area

Excavation for footings or foundation walls shall extend below depth of soil subjected to seasonal or characteristic volume change to undisturbed soil that provides adequate bearing capacity. So, topsoil is normally removed and variations in ground level corrected.

Therefore, the best recommended depth of foundation is from 1.0 m to 1.5 m from original ground level as presented by NHBC [32].

The depth of foundation depends on some factors such as the availability of soil with adequate bearing capacity, depth of shrinkage and swelling as in case of clayey soils, due to seasonal changes which may cause appreciable movements; and the depth of frost penetration in case of fine sand and silt. Also, proximity of excavation and depth of ground water table are considered.

Geoelectrical foundation engineering competence of soils can be qualitatively evaluated from layer resistivity; the higher the value of a layer resistivity, the higher the competence.

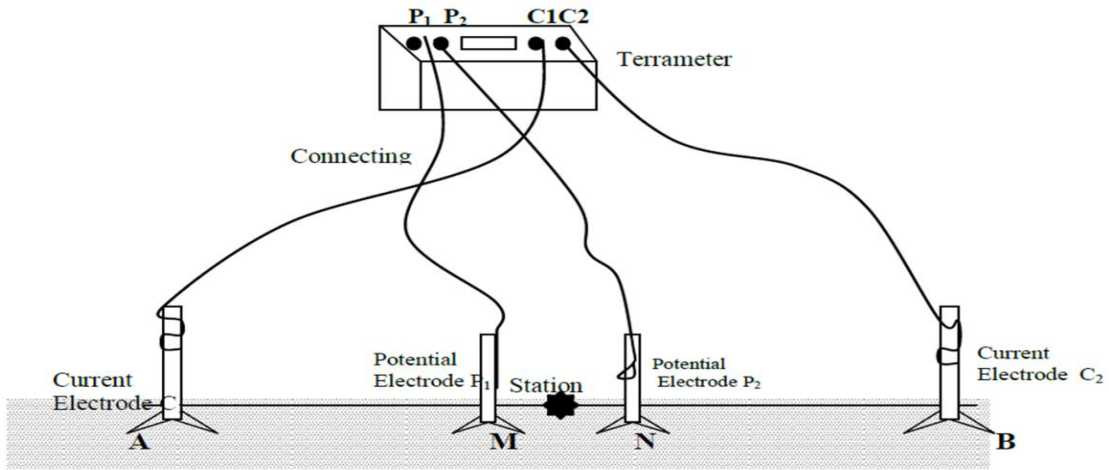


Fig. 4. Schematic diagram of the Schlumberger electrode configuration used

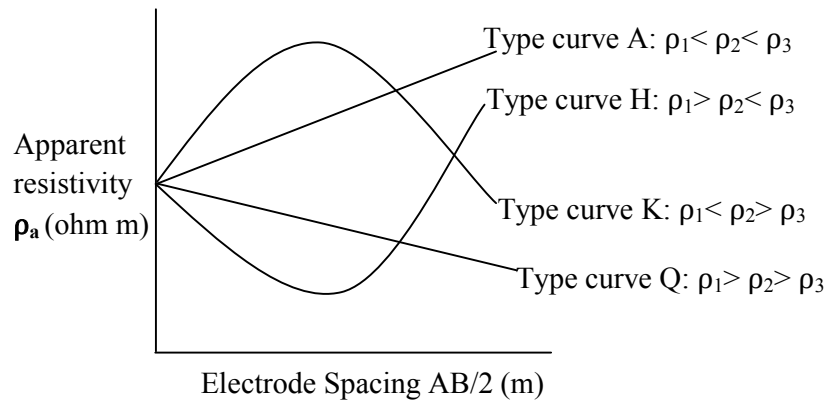


Fig. 5. Schematic diagram of resistivity type curves for layered structures.

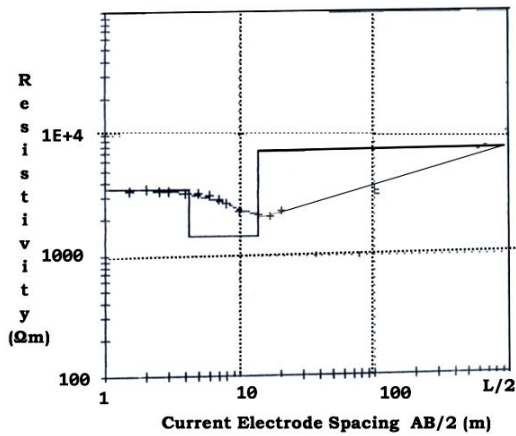


Fig. 6. Resistivity curve of VES 6 (Igbugbo Opposite GCU)

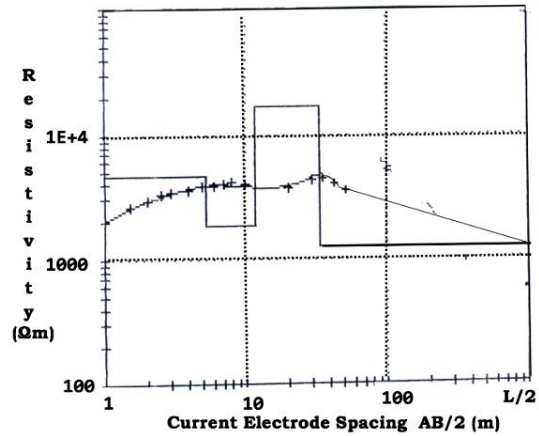


Fig. 7. Resistivity curve of VES 2 at new industrial market

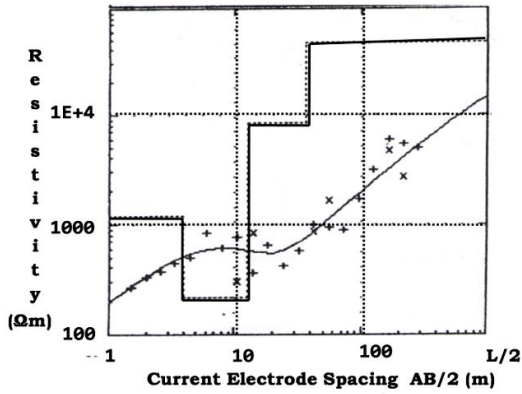


Fig. 8. A computer modelled curve of VES 17 at Amaoba

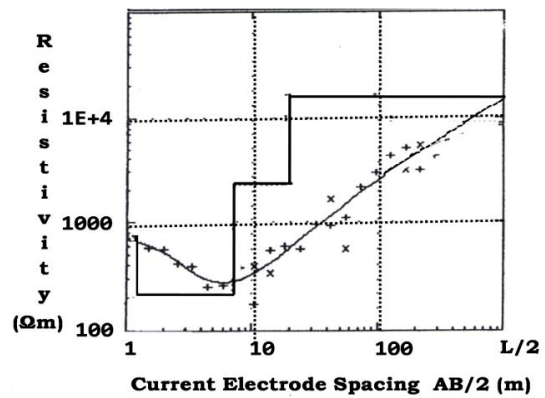


Fig. 9. A computer modelled curve of VES 11 in front of NRCRI

Amos-Uhegbu [26] and [30] extensively worked within the study area and lithologically deduced from drill-hole and geoelectric data that sediments with resistivity < 100 Ωm are clays, 100 Ωm – 500 Ωm are silts, 500 Ωm – 1500 Ωm are fine-grained sands, 1500 Ωm – 3000 Ωm are medium-grained sands, 3000 Ωm – 5500 Ωm are coarse-grained sands, and > 5500 Ωm are sandstone.

By using a depth of 1.2 m and a minimum of 750 Ωm in the evaluation; the vicinity of VES 8 is the most suitable site for the construction of high rising building. This is followed by VES station 9, 6, 14 and 15. While the unsuitable sites for the construction of high rising building are VES 4, 10, 11, 12 and 16 (Fig. 13).

Recall that the higher the value of a layer resistivity, the higher the competence; therefore the lower the value, the lesser the competence. From the resistivity values of topsoils, the vicinity of VES 3, 4, 7, 16 and 17 are poor materials for any structural engineering purpose (Fig. 14). This is evident from the usual cracking and collapse of the portion of road along Umuahia-Ikot-Ekpene highway where the data of VES 17 was acquired. This could be associated with the outcrop of local clay lenses at the vicinity as have been the case in the studies and guidelines made by AASHTO [33,34] and FMWH [35].

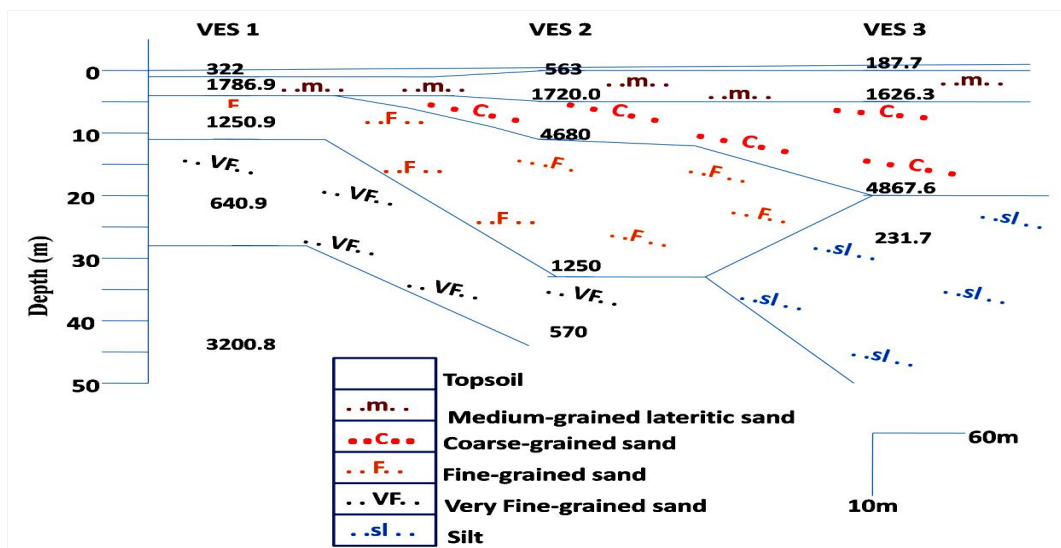


Fig. 10. Geoelectric sections along the first traverse

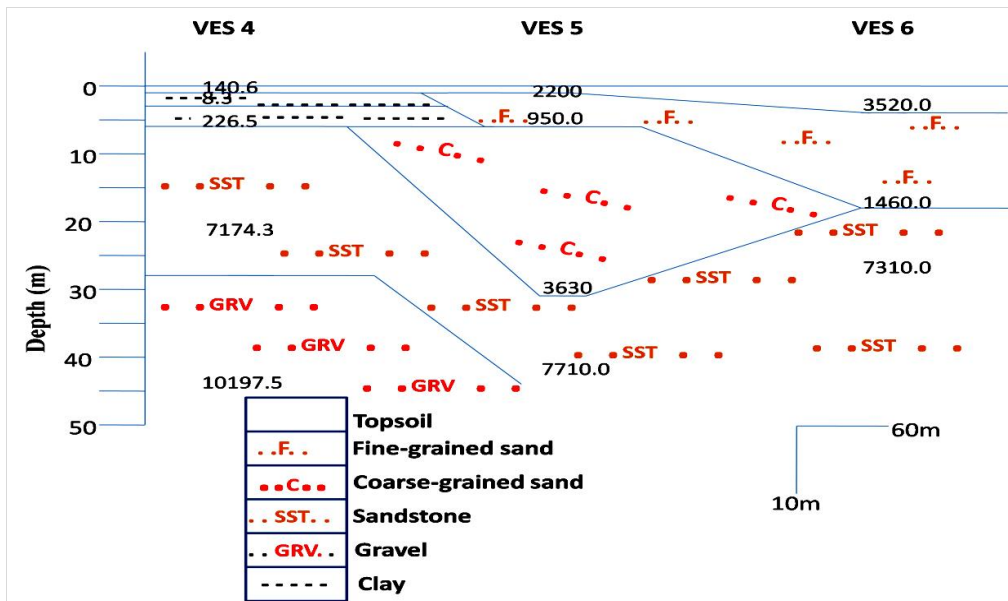


Fig. 11. Goelectric sections along the second traverse

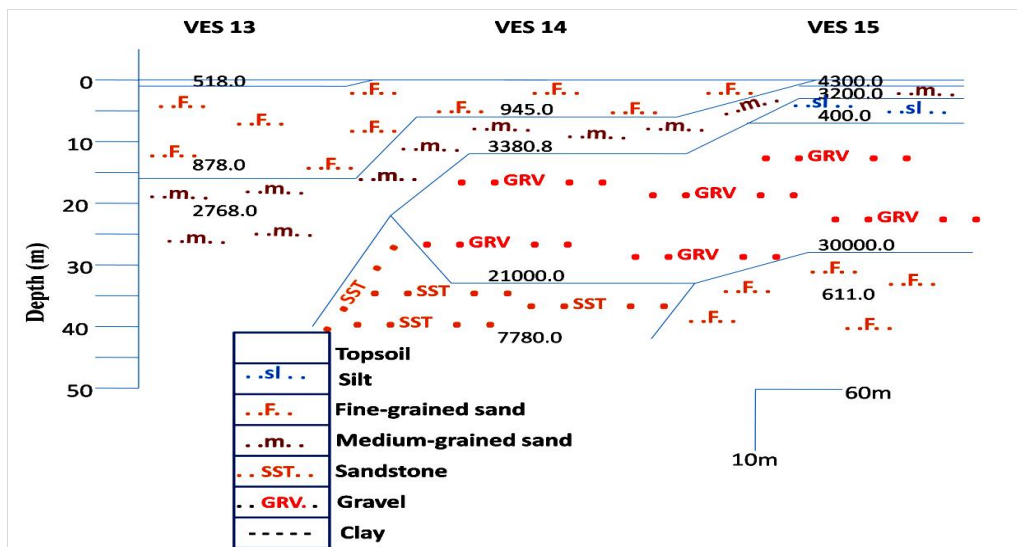


Fig. 12. Goelectric sections along the fifth traverse

Table 4. A profile of VES data of the various sounding stations in the study area

VES Nos.	Resistivity of layers (Ωm)	Thickness of layers (m)	Type curve
VES 1	$\rho_1 = 332$	$t_1 = 0.8$	HKH
	$\rho_2 = 1786.9$	$t_2 = 3.2$	
	$\rho_3 = 1250.9$	$t_3 = 7.0$	
	$\rho_4 = 640.9$	$t_4 = 16.7$	
	$\rho_5 = 3200.8$	$t_5 = ?$	
VES 2	$\rho_1 = 563$	$t_1 = 0.2$	AKQ
	$\rho_2 = 1720.0$	$t_2 = 5.1$	
	$\rho_3 = 4680$	$t_3 = 6.4$	
	$\rho_4 = 1250$	$t_4 = 22.2$	

VES Nos.	Resistivity of layers (Ωm)	Thickness of layers (m)	Type curve
VES 3	$\rho_5 = 570$	$t_5 = ?$	AK
	$\rho_1 = 187.7$	$t_1 = 0.6$	
	$\rho_2 = 1626.3$	$t_2 = 4.8$	
	$\rho_3 = 4867.6$	$t_3 = 15.1$	
	$\rho_4 = 231.7$	$t_4 = ?$	
VES 4	$\rho_1 = 140.6$	$t_1 = 0.8$	HAA
	$\rho_2 = 8.3$	$t_2 = 1.8$	
	$\rho_3 = 226.5$	$t_3 = 1.4$	
	$\rho_4 = 7147.3$	$t_4 = 22.2$	
	$\rho_5 = 10197.5$	$t_5 = ?$	
VES 5	$\rho_1 = 2200.0$	$t_1 = 0.4$	HA
	$\rho_2 = 950.0$	$t_2 = 6.5$	
	$\rho_3 = 3630.0$	$t_3 = 25.2$	
	$\rho_4 = 7710.0$	$t_4 = ?$	
VES 6	$\rho_1 = 3520.0$	$t_1 = 4.2$	H
	$\rho_2 = 1460.0$	$t_2 = 13.9$	
	$\rho_3 = 7310.0$	$t_3 = ?$	
VES 7	$\rho_1 = 114.0$	$t_1 = 1.0$	KH
	$\rho_2 = 1105.0$	$t_2 = 20.9$	
	$\rho_3 = 295.0$	$t_3 = 9.2$	
	$\rho_4 = 527.0$	$t_4 = ?$	
VES 8	$\rho_1 = 575.0$	$t_1 = 0.4$	KHK
	$\rho_2 = 7370.0$	$t_2 = 2.4$	
	$\rho_3 = 519.0$	$t_3 = 4.7$	
	$\rho_4 = 12000.0$	$t_4 = 17.8$	
	$\rho_5 = 68.6$	$t_5 = ?$	
VES 9	$\rho_1 = 5104.2$	$t_1 = 3.1$	Q
	$\rho_2 = 2568.2$	$t_2 = 28.1$	
	$\rho_3 = 845.1$	$t_3 = ?$	
VES 10	$\rho_1 = 37999.0$	$t_1 = 0.4$	HKHQ
	$\rho_2 = 65.4$	$t_2 = 0.8$	
	$\rho_3 = 666.8$	$t_3 = 2.3$	
	$\rho_4 = 51.0$	$t_4 = 6.7$	
	$\rho_5 = 3276.1$	$t_5 = 12.4$	
	$\rho_6 = 61,788$	$t_6 = ?$	
VES 11	$\rho_1 = 745.0$	$t_1 = 1.2$	HQ
	$\rho_2 = 220.2$	$t_2 = 6.1$	
	$\rho_3 = 2370.6$	$t_3 = 10.7$	
	$\rho_4 = 16580.7$	$t_4 = ?$	
VES 12	$\rho_1 = 705.0$	$t_1 = 1.2$	HA
	$\rho_2 = 15.0$	$t_2 = 1.6$	
	$\rho_3 = 805.0$	$t_3 = 2.8$	
	$\rho_4 = 65810.7$	$t_4 = ?$	
VES 13	$\rho_1 = 518.0$	$t_1 = 0.6$	A
	$\rho_2 = 878.0$	$t_2 = 15.0$	
	$\rho_3 = 2768.0$	$t_3 = ?$	
VES 14	$\rho_1 = 945.0$	$t_1 = 5.0$	AK
	$\rho_2 = 3380.8$	$t_2 = 7.0$	
	$\rho_3 = 21000.0$	$t_3 = 21.5$	
	$\rho_4 = 7780.0$	$t_4 = ?$	
VES 15	$\rho_1 = 4300.0$	$t_1 = 1.2$	QHK
	$\rho_2 = 3200.0$	$t_2 = 1.6$	
	$\rho_3 = 400.0$	$t_3 = 4.0$	
	$\rho_4 = 30000.0$	$t_4 = 21.4$	
	$\rho_5 = 611.0$	$t_5 = ?$	
VES 16	$\rho_1 = 14.5$	$t_1 = 1.2$	A
	$\rho_2 = 16.5$	$t_2 = 1.6$	
	$\rho_3 = 86875.0$	$t_3 = ?$	

VES Nos.	Resistivity of layers (Ωm)	Thickness of layers (m)	Type curve
VES 17	$\rho_1 = 132.0$	$t_1 = 0.6$	KHA
	$\rho_2 = 1200.0$	$t_2 = 3.0$	
	$\rho_3 = 220.0$	$t_3 = 8.6$	
	$\rho_4 = 8400.0$	$t_4 = 23.4$	
	$\rho_5 = 46700.0$	$t_5 = ?$	
VES 18	$\rho_1 = 5130.0$	$t_1 = 0.6$	Q
	$\rho_2 = 1400.0$	$t_2 = 4.5$	
	$\rho_3 = 176.0$	$t_3 = ?$	

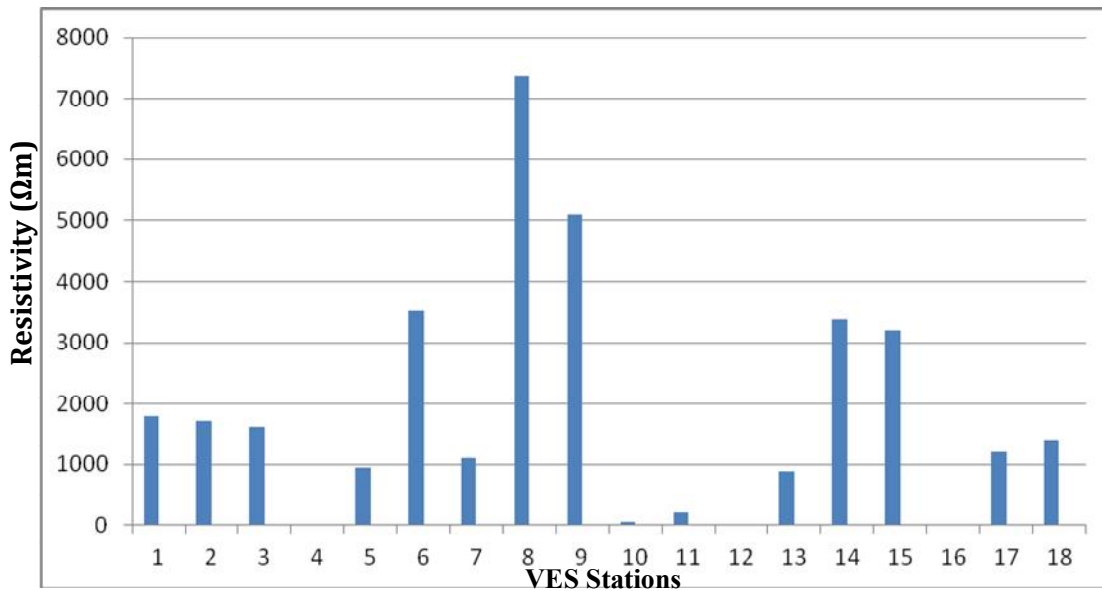


Fig. 13. A histogram of the foundation competence of the subsurface based on resistivity values of the study area

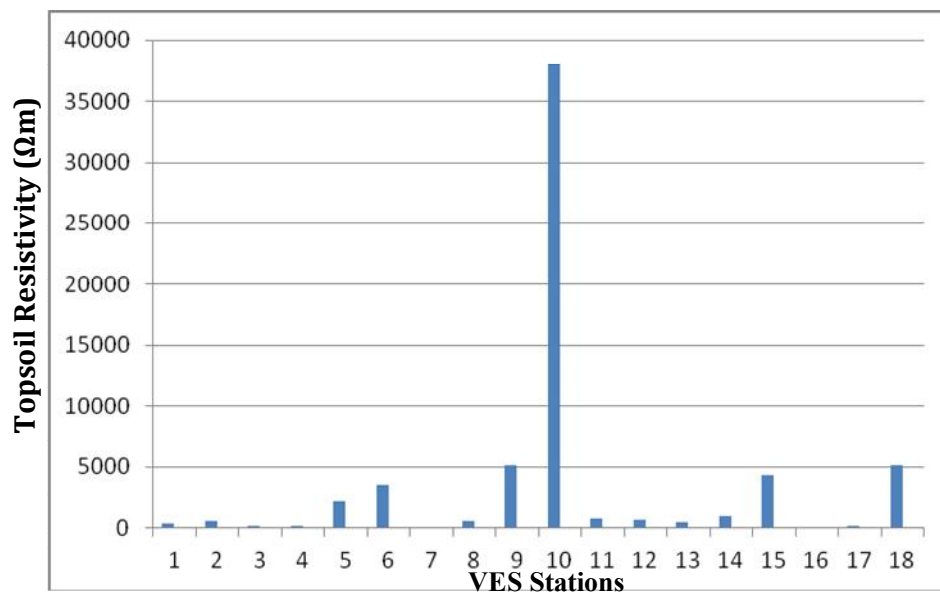


Fig. 14. A histogram of Topsoil resistivity of the study area

4. CONCLUSION

The geophysical results revealed three to six geoelectric sequences within the study area which comprises topsoil, sands, silts, clays and possibly gravel. The thickness of the topsoils range from about 0.2 m to about 5.0 m; but most are less than 2 m. The thickness of the topsoils of the vicinity of VES 6, 9, and 14 are by far greater than 2 m probably because construction work have been done in the area and the topsoils must have been removed during the levelling of the area for the construction.

By using the resistivity values together with depth of 1.2 m in the evaluation, the vicinity of VES 8, 9, 6, 14 and 15 are suitable for the construction of high rising building; while the unsuitable sites are VES 4, 10, 11, 12 and 16. Also, the vicinity of VES 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 13, 17 and 18 can be considered for such construction under the supervision of structural and geotechnical experts.

Further foundation investigation using alternative detailed geophysical (seismic) and geotechnical investigations of the area is also recommended.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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