A Comparative Study of the Ultimate Pile Load Capacity for Cohesive Soil
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Abstract:
The calculation of ultimate pile load capacity can be carried out using numerous techniques which include the pile load tests, in-situ penetration tests and also the static and dynamic methods. The difficulties in obtaining un-disturbed samples at the depths of deep foundations make the estimation of soil properties a tedious task and thus the analytical procedures are much relied upon for finding out the ultimate capacities for pile designs. However, the load test data can be used for further validating the statically obtained values and conforming the piles to fall below the estimated values of ultimate capacities. The ultimate pile load capacity from various case studies have been found out, for a general case study and real time projects, using various static methods and compared with each other to find out the approaches that gives the most realistic values of capacities for cohesive soils.

Keywords: Pile Load, Static method, Dynamic method.

1. INTRODUCTION
A pile carries the load acting on it in the form of frictional resistance contributed by the frictional strength of the soil present along the pile shaft coupled with the pile-soil interactions and by the end bearing resistance attained from the bearing capacity of the hard and less compressible stratum onto which the pile is embedded. Depending on the surface conditions in the pile embedment, the behavior of pile also shows considerable variation under the action of load and the factors contributing the strength in each of the above conditions also vary respectively. However it can be seen that the effective over burden pressure and the corresponding bearing capacity factors are the most crucial factors for determining pile capacity in case of piles founded on non-cohesive soils and on the other hand, the values of undrained cohesion and adhesion factors are the deciding factors of ultimate pile capacity determination in the case of cohesive soils.

This paper studies the variation of ultimate pile load capacities as obtained from the various static analysis methods for piles in non cohesive soils and the different underlying approaches considered for estimating the ultimate capacities. The results of the study has been arrived at by considering general and real time case studies of bored cast in-situ concrete piles in non-cohesive soils. For non-cohesive soils, the calculation of ultimate pile load capacity takes into account the characteristics of pile behavior such as the concept of critical depth, where in a linear increase of frictional resistance takes place till the critical depth of pile depending on the internal friction angle as $15\phi$ for $\phi \leq 30^\circ$ and $20\phi$ for $\phi \geq 40^\circ$, where $d$ is the diameter of the pile. The methods considered for the study have been further suited to friction and end bearing piles and they have been compared with each other to draw conclusion on the suitability of the approach and the method on the various ground and piling conditions. The methods have been studied and the various parameters contributing to the calculations have been examined to arrive at the results and comparisons. Several comparisons have been made in this regard on the light of which the variation in the values obtained from the various methods when compared with each other and the results prove useful in finding the suitability of the particular methods to the ground conditions and the adoptability and accuracy of the same. This data could further be used to derive correlations between the values obtained from the soil reports, standard penetration test data and other relevant parameters.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
[1] BogumilWrana
This paper studied the pile load capacity calculation methods based on Eurocode 7 and explained about the various problems encountered in the calculation of foundation capacity. The calculation of long term pile capacity of non-cohesive and cohesive soils were studied by the use of beta method and alpha method was used for the calculation of short term pile capacity. The study explained in detail the methods used in the calculation of capacity and the relevance of the parameters involved. The study revealed that angle of friction at the tip of the pile and below, angle of dilation of the soil, shear modulus, Poisson’s ratio are some of the major parameters affecting the end bearing capacity. Also the relevance of considering the critical depth for calculation of skin friction was explained. The study revealed that the frictional resistance does not remain constant after the critical depth in the light of the experimental results but neither increases linearly till the pile tip but rather there is an increase of skin friction till close to the pile tip and there after a drop in the value is seen. The in-situ penetration tests such as the standard penetration test and the cone penetration test was also discussed in the paper.

In this paper, different methods that are used for the interpretation of the results from pile load tests have been studied and cross compared with empirical relations for predicting the load capacities. The results were cited based on a case study of ShahidRajaee Port Complex Project in south of Iran and the empirical relations were based on the American Petroleum Institute (API) and American Association for State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). The proposals of the API and AASHTO were based on the use of
undrained parameters in the case of cohesive soils and relative density and SPT-N value in case of cohesionless soil for the estimation of bearing capacity. The results from the study showed that the predictions based on empirical relations were coherent with the experimental data observed from site and the results showed closer coherence in case of piles that were found on cohesionless soils than in case of cohesive soils.

This study was to estimate the reliability of using the data obtained from standard penetration tests for the prediction of certain soil properties and also shear strength parameters for the case of silty clay with sand soil. The effects of the standard penetration data on the shear strength of soil was also examined under the scope of this study. The determination of real values of soil properties demanded special techniques where by which undisturbed samples could be obtained along with the consideration of the initial over burden pressure. Problems such as disturbances caused during handling, release of excessive over burden pressure, transportation and poor laboratory conditions for the testing of samples added to the difficulties in obtaining accurate values from site conditions were explained in the paper. The study was evaluated based on experimental results from samples collected and correlating the results obtained experimentally with the corrected SPT N values to evaluate the affects of such parameter on the soil properties. The study was able to conclude that depth of the soil below the ground surface and shear strength of soil strongly affect the SPT number where as the Atterberg limits had no affect on the SPT number. Also the shear strength properties could be predicted quite fairly by correlating results from standard penetration test was another conclusion drawn in this paper.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 General
The calculation of load carrying capacity by static method uses the principle that the ultimate load carrying capacity of pile is the sum of load carrying capacity of the shaft of pile in friction in cohesionless soils or adhesion in case of cohesive soils. Therefore the ultimate pile load capacity \( Q_u \) is obtained as,

\[
Q_u = Q_b + Q_t - W_p
\]

Where,
- \( Q_b \) = base (or tip or point) resistance of pile.
- \( Q_t \) = shaft resistance due to adhesion of friction between the pile shaft and soil.
- \( W_p \) = weight of pile.

Here the calculation of quantities \( Q_u \) and \( Q_t \) varies from method to method. However in all these approaches pile capacities are basically estimated by the characteristics of soil. The pile capacity is further depend on many factors such as the material and shape of pile, type of soil condition, penetration or installation techniques and so on. Due to the influence of these factors the pile capacities obtained based on these analytical approaches may vary from the values of pile capacity obtained from the field load tests. Hence the variation of about 20% may be considered as permissible change of values.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 IS Code Method
The Indian Standard Code gives the load carrying capacity of piles through static analysis in IS 2911(Part 1/Sec 1)-For driven cast in-situ concrete piles.

\[
Q_u = A_p \cdot c \cdot N_c \cdot C_u + \sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i c_i A_i
\]

Where,
- \( A_p \) = cross sectional area of the pile tip, in \( m^2 \);
- \( N_c \) = bearing capacity factor, may be taken as 9;
- \( c = \) average cohesion at the pile tip, in \( kN/m^2 \);
- \( \alpha = \) adhesion factor obtained from Dennis and Olson curve; \( \alpha = adhesion \) factor for the \( i \)th layer depending on the consistency of the soil;
- \( A_p = \) area of the pile shaft, in \( m^2 \);
- \( A_i = \) area of the pile shaft, in \( m^2 \);
- \( C_u = \) average undrained shear strength of clay along the shaft;
- \( A_o = \) cross sectional area of the pile tip, in \( m^2 \);
- \( c_i = \) undrained shear strength of clay at the base level;
- \( \sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i c_i A_i = \) summation for layers 1 to \( n \) in which pile is installed and which contribute to positive skin friction;
- \( N_c = \) bearing capacity factor, may be taken as 9.

According to Annex B, clause 6.3.1.1 and 6.3.2, The ultimate pile load capacity \( Q_u \) in \( kN \) is,

\[
Q_u = A_p \cdot c \cdot N_c \cdot C_u + \sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i c_i A_i
\]

The first term gives the end-bearing resistance and second term gives the skin friction resistance.

Where,
- \( A_p = cross sectional area of the pile tip, in m^2 \);
- \( N_c = bearing capacity factor, may be taken as 9 \);
- \( c = average cohesion at the pile tip, in kN/m^2 \);
- \( \sum_{i=1}^{n} = \) summation for layers 1 to \( n \) in which pile is installed and which contribute to positive skin friction;

\[ Q_u = c N_A_o + \alpha c^2 A \]

Where,
- \( c \) = undrained shear strength of clay at the base level;
- \( \alpha = adhesion \) factor obtained from Dennis and Olson curve;
- \( c^2 = average undrained shear strength of clay along the shaft; \)
- \( A_o = cross sectional area of the pile tip, in m^2 \); 
- \( A = area of the pile shaft, in m^2 \);

The Dennis and Olsen curve gives the values of adhesion factor, \( \alpha \) for penetrations less than 30 m. The value of \( \alpha \) decreases with the increasing depth of penetration beyond 30m as they undergo elastic shortening resulting in small shear strain or slip with greater length. Therefore, it is suggested that

IS 2911(Part 1/Sec 2)-For bored cast in-situ concrete piles.

IS 2911(Part 1/Sec 3)-For driven pre cast concrete piles.

IS 2911(Part 1/Sec 4)-For precast concrete piles in prebored holes.

Fig.3.1: Variation of adhesion factor with undrained shear strength

3.2.2. Skin Resistance by a Method:
This method was given by Dennis and Olsen as a simplified approach to problems arising from difference in judgment of soil conditions and wrong interpretations of the geotechnical engineers which often leads to discrepancies in the values of load capacity obtained. They developed a simple curve for finding the relation between the adhesion factor and undrained shear strength of clay. According to this method the ultimate pile load capacity \( Q_u \) from clay is obtained as,

\[ Q_u = c N_A_o + \alpha c^2 A \]

Where,
- \( c \) = undrained shear strength of clay at the base level;
- \( \alpha = adhesion \) factor obtained from Dennis and Olson curve;
- \( c = average undrained shear strength of clay along the shaft; \)
- \( A_o = cross sectional area of the pile tip, in m^2 \); 
- \( A = area of the pile shaft, in m^2 \);

The Dennis and Olsen curve gives the values of adhesion factor, \( \alpha \) for penetrations less than 30 m. The value of \( \alpha \) decreases with the increasing depth of penetration beyond 30m as they undergo elastic shortening resulting in small shear strain or slip with greater length. Therefore, it is suggested that

IS 2911(Part 1/Sec 2)-For bored cast in-situ concrete piles.

IS 2911(Part 1/Sec 3)-For driven pre cast concrete piles.
for embedment greater than 50m the value of $\alpha$ must be multiplied by a factor of 0.56 and for embedment between 30m and 50m, the reduction factor may be considered to vary linearly from 0.1 to 0.56.

3.2.3. Effective Stress Method ($\beta$ Method):
In this method, the unit skin friction $f_s$ is defined as,

$$f_s = K_s \tan \delta q_0' = \beta q_0'$$

$$\beta = K_s \tan \delta$$

$$\beta = (1 - \sin \phi) \tan \phi$$

Where,

$K_s =$ lateral earth pressure coefficient.

$\delta =$ angle of wall friction.

$q_0' =$ average effective overburden pressure.

$\beta =$ the skin factor.

$\phi =$ effective angle of internal friction.

3.2.4. Meyerhof's Method:
Meyerhof suggested a simple semi-empirical relationship for determining skin friction in clay soils.

For driven piles:

$$f_s = 1.5 c_u \tan \phi$$

For bored piles:

$$f_s = c_u \tan \phi$$

Note:

*Taking $\phi=20^\circ$ for stiff to very stiff clays,
* $f_s = 0.55 c_u$ (for driven piles)
* $f_s = 0.36 c_u$ (for bored piles)

4. CASE STUDY

4.1 GENERAL CASE STUDY – 1

Table 4.1: Details of Case Study - 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of pile</th>
<th>Bored cast in-situ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diameter of pile</td>
<td>600mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of pile</td>
<td>20m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit weight of soil</td>
<td>18kN/m$^3$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.1 Results

Table 4.2: Results of Case Study-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Case Study – 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Base Resistance ($Q_b$) (kN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS Code Method</td>
<td>76.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha$-Method</td>
<td>76.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\beta$-Method</td>
<td>76.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyerhof's Method</td>
<td>76.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 CASE STUDY 2

Table 4.3: Details of Case Study - 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of structure</th>
<th>Residential building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Name</td>
<td>Proposed high rise residential building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of pile</td>
<td>Bored cast in-situ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diameter of pile</td>
<td>1000mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of pile</td>
<td>45m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit weight of soil</td>
<td>18kN/m$^3$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Details of Case Study - 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Types of soil</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>SPT N value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Layer 1</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 2</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 3</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 4</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 5</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 6</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 7</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 8</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 8</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

SPT N value at termination depth = 100
Angle of internal friction = $20^\circ$
4.2 Results

Table 4.5: Results of Case Study - 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Case Study – 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Base Resistance (Q_b) (kN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS Code Method</td>
<td>971.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>α-Method</td>
<td>971.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β-Method</td>
<td>971.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyerhof’s Method</td>
<td>971.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 4.2: Results of Case Study - 2

4.3 CASE STUDY – 3

Table 4.6: Details of Case Study - 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of structure</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Types of pile</th>
<th>Diameter of pile</th>
<th>Length of pile</th>
<th>Unit weight of soil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential building</td>
<td>ORB tower</td>
<td>Noida</td>
<td>Bored cast in-situ</td>
<td>100mm</td>
<td>33m</td>
<td>18kN/m³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Sub surface conditions for case study - 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Types of soil</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>SPT N value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Layer 1</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 2</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer 3</td>
<td>clay</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
SPT N value at termination depth = 150
Angle of internal friction = 20°

4.3.1 Results

Table 4.8: Results of Case Study - 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Case Study – 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Base Resistance (Q_u) (kN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS Code Method</td>
<td>971.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>α-Method</td>
<td>971.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β-Method</td>
<td>971.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyerhof’s Method</td>
<td>971.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 4.3: Results of Case Study - 3

5. COMMENTS

5.1 IS CODE METHOD:
In case of cohesive soils the major contributing factor to the pile capacity is the frictional resistance provided by the soil present in the pile-soil interface. Here, the value of ultimate load capacity is obtained as the sum of the end bearing resistance and frictional resistance and both can be estimated separately using the formula. The major factor in determining the resistance is the value of undrained cohesion and the adhesion factor as suggested by the code in this method. The determination of adhesion factor separately for each of the change in strata increases the accuracy of values as predicted by this method.

The case studies reveal that the values of ultimate capacities as obtained from this method is much in conformity to all the other methods compared in the study and gives a fairly judicious prediction of ultimate load capacity values.

5.2 SKIN RESISTANCE BY α METHOD:
This method varies from the IS method in the value of adhesion factor. Here the value of adhesion factor is obtained from the Dennis and Olsen curve and uses a multiplication factor depending on the range of pile lengths.
From the case studies, it can be seen that the adhesion factor as suggested by this method is obtained from the value of undrained cohesion at the pile tip and hence is more a generalized value compared to the IS code method. However the value of the ultimate load capacity obtained is seen to be close to the values obtained from the IS method.

5.3 EFFECTIVE STRESS METHOD (β METHOD):
This method depends on parameters such as lateral pressure coefficient, skin factor and the friction angles between the soil and pile-soil system for the estimation of ultimate load capacity. The average effective over burden pressure is also a contributing factor to the ultimate frictional resistance by this method. The case studies reveal a varying pattern in the range of values obtained in this method by sometimes providing the highest of estimated values and sometimes the lowest of ultimate capacities in comparison to the other methods. Due to this fluctuating patterns this method is the least preferred among the rest of the methods.

5.4 MEYERHOF’S METHOD:
This is a highly simplified empirical relationship for estimating the pile capacity with the unit skin friction dependent only on the values of cohesion and the internal friction angle. However, the case studies reveal a varying pattern in the values obtained by giving both the high end and low end values in different cases and hence isn’t preferred as much as the IS method and α method.

Table 5.1: Order of preference of methods for cohesive soils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREFERENCE NO.</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>IS Code Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Skin Resistance by α Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meyerhof’s Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Effective Stress Method (β Method)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. REFERENCES


