The influence of the fluid dielectric constant on the shear strength of a unsaturated soil

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Keywords
Dielectric constant
Napl
Shear strength
Unsaturated soils

1. Introduction

According to Garcia et al. (2004), leaks of organic and inorganic products that occur in fuel tanks and pipes are the most common cause of contaminant releases to the environment. Besides the possible contamination, the presence of these substances can affect the soil stress-strain behavior depending on the soil-fluid interaction, which differs according to the physical-chemical properties of the fluids involved. It can be said, however, that studies concerning the mechanical behavior of soil when saturated by different interstitial fluids, such as hydrocarbons, are still scarce. Almost all the papers published since the 1980s (Brown & Anderson, 1983; Brown & Thomas, 1984; Brown & Thomas, 1986; Fernandez & Quigley, 1985; Schramm et al., 1986; Budhu et al., 1991; Li et al., 1996; Oliveira, 2001) focus on the hydraulic behavior of the soil when percolated by different fluids.

The fluid polarity can be evaluated by its dielectric constant. The value of \( \varepsilon_r \) can be calculated by the ratio between the charge storage capacity of a capacitor filled with the medium of interest with that of the same capacitor with vacuum between the plates. According to Halliday et al. (2007), \( \varepsilon_r \) is related to the ability of the fluid molecules to polarize, orienting their poles under an electric field. For three phase media such as the soil, the value of \( \varepsilon_r \) can be estimated through semi-empiric formulas such as the CRIM (Complex Refractive Index Method, comprised by Equation 1), which relates the dielectric constant of a unsaturated porous medium with its porosity, \( n \), and the water degree of saturation, \( Sr \). Although this equation was originally proposed for water, its use can be extended for a unsaturated porous medium partially filled with other interstitial fluids.

\[
\sqrt{\varepsilon_r} = n \cdot Sr \sqrt{\varepsilon_{rw}} + (1-n) \sqrt{\varepsilon_{rs}} + n(1-Sr) \sqrt{\varepsilon_{air}}
\]

where \( \varepsilon_{rw} \), \( \varepsilon_{rs} \), and \( \varepsilon_{air} \) are, respectively, the relative dielectric constant of the soil as a whole, water, solid particles and air. Table 1 shows \( \varepsilon_r \) typical values for different materials (Davis & Annan, 1989). Most minerals have \( \varepsilon_r \) values between 4 and 5. These values are near to the minimum values presented in Table 1 for silt, sand, and clay.

Anandarajah & Zhao (2000) evaluated the shear strength of a clay when saturated by fluids of different dielectric constants. The samples were saturated and tested in a triaxial equipment. The fluids used in the tests were formaldehyde \( (\varepsilon_r = 111) \), water \( (\varepsilon_r = 80) \), ethanol \( (\varepsilon_r = 24.3) \), acetic acid \( (\varepsilon_r = 6.16) \), triethylamine \( (\varepsilon_r = 2.42) \) and heptane...
The influence of the fluid dielectric constant on the shear strength of a unsaturated soil

Table 1. Typical values of the relative dielectric constants for different materials.

| Material         | Relative dielectric constant ($\varepsilon_r$) |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Air              | 1                                             |
| Water            | 80                                            |
| Diesel           | 2.13                                          |
| Ethanol          | 24.3                                          |
| Solid particles  | 4-5                                           |
| Dry sand         | 3-5                                           |
| Silt             | 5-30                                          |
| Clay             | 5-40                                          |

Source: Adapted from Davis & Annan (1989).

($\varepsilon_r = 1.91$). Figure 1 presents the results obtained by the cited authors. As can be noted, the soil shear strength varies non-linearly with $\varepsilon_r$.

Di Maio et al. (2004) studied the shear strength of two clays from Italy (Bisaccia clay and bentonite Ponza) when saturated with water, NaCl solutions and cyclohexane. According to these authors, the minimum values of shear strength for both clays occurred when the specimens were saturated with water. The use of interstitial fluids with $\varepsilon_r$ values lower than water increased soil shear strength. Calvello et al. (2005) found similar results when performing direct shear and unconfined compression tests in soil samples saturated with distillate water, salt solutions in different concentrations and organic fluids with different dielectric constants.

The influence of the interstitial fluid polarity on the soil shear strength values is explained, at least partially, by the double layer theory. The most widely accepted conceptual model to represent the interactions between the fluid and the clay surface is the diffuse double layer system. This model is an evolution of the Helmholtz-Smoluchowski theory proposed by Helmholtz (1879-1914; see Helmholtz, 1879) and improved by the work of Gouy-Chapman (1910-1913). The diffuse double layer system consists of the clay particles, adsorbed cations, and water molecules in one layer, while the other layer is a diffuse swarm of counterions. Although this model does not take into account the effect of the potential energy in the oriented molecules of water that surround the clay particles, it is useful to explain some basic phenomena in a clay-water-electrolyte system (Fang, 1997).

Equation 2 can be used to predict the double layer thickness, $t$, based on the Gouy-Chapman theory (Gouy, 1910). It can be seen from Equation 2 that an increase in the electrolyte concentration or a decrease in the fluid dielectric constant reduces the double layer thickness, bringing the particles closer to each other and increasing soil particle interaction forces.

$$t = \frac{\varepsilon, k_B T}{8 \pi n_e e^2 \nu^2}$$

In Equation 2, $\varepsilon$ is the dielectric constant, $K_B$ is the Boltzmann constant, $T$ is the temperature, $n_e$ is the electrolyte concentration, $e$ is the elementary charge and $\nu$ is the ionic valence. In this paper, an investigation is performed about how the shear strength of a residual soil of granite-gneiss is affected when its voids are filled, in different proportions, with fluids of dielectric constants smaller than water.
2. Testing materials and methods

2.1 Materials - soil

The soil used in this study was a granite-gneiss residual soil, RGG, which is predominant in the city of Salvador, BA, Brazil. The geotechnical characterization tests were executed according to the following standards: NBR 7181 (ABNT, 1984); NBR 6489 (ABNT, 1984); NBR 7180 (ABNT, 1984); NBR 6508 (ABNT, 1984) and NBR 7182 (ABNT, 1986). Table 2 presents the main RGG geotechnical characteristics (void ratio, e, and porosity, n, correspond to optimum compaction conditions, normal Proctor energy).

Complementary tests were also performed on RGG specimens in order to determine specific surface area, SS, pore volume, PV, chemical composition and liquid retention curves, SLRC, besides optical microscopy analysis. SS and PV were determined using the physisorption of N2 technique, B.E.T. method (Brunauer et al., 1938) and a Micromeritics ASAP 2020 Porosimetry System. Samples were heated at 300 °C for 12 h in vacuum (≈267 Pa) for the removal of water or any other physisorbed substances prior to the tests.

The effects of soil texture on the values of the SS values were analyzed by preparing the samples in four different conditions: a) material passing through the sieve #10 and retained on the sieve #16; b) material passing through the sieve #80; c) material passing through the sieve #200; and d) clay fraction obtained in a sedimentation procedure. Specimen mass for each test was about 0.20 g. Table 3 presents the obtained results. More results are available in Almeida (2016). The SS values of the clay fraction, according to Hillel (1980), indicate the presence of the minerals kaolinite and illite.

Optical microscopy was performed according to procedures proposed by Kaya & Fang (2005). A 10 mL beaker was filled with a solution containing 10 % of the soil and 90 % of the given fluid (water, ethanol, or diesel) in weight and then stirred for one minute in order to improve soil-fluid interactions. After that, a drop of the solution was poured onto a glass streak plate and then taken to the optical microscope (Olympus brand, BX41 model, 100x resolution and attached photographic camera Olympus brand, Evolt E330 model). Figure 2 presents the results of the optical microscopy analyses. In this figure it is possible to visualize the effect of each fluid in terms of soil flocculation/dispersion (tests were performed in duplicate). Samples with high polarity interstitial fluid (water) tended to present a disperse structure, whereas samples immersed in diesel presented a flocculated structure. Ethanol (intermediate εr) presented an intermediate behavior.

RGG elementary composition was determined using the X-ray fluorescence technique (EDX) and an EDX-720 Shimadzu spectrometer. RGG powder samples were analyzed in 5mm polypropylene holders, tightly covered with a 5 μm polypropylene film. The X-rays fluorescence spectra were collected in a vacuumed environment. Tests were performed in a single batch of sixteen samples retrieved from a

### Table 2. Results from the geotechnical characterization of the residual granite-gniss soil.

| Grain size composition (%) | Atteberg limits (%) | Compaction normal Proctor energy | γc (kN/m³) | ε | n |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|---|---|
| Sand | Silt | Clay | Wc | Wr | Ic | γc (kN/m³) | w'  (%) | 27.04 | 1.03 | 0.51 |
| 26 | 18 | 56 | 78 | 42 | 36 | 13.34 | 31.80 |

### Table 3. RGG specific surface and pore volume in different texture conditions.

| Material | SS (m²/g) | PV (cm³/g) |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Passing through the sieve #10 and retained on the sieve #16 | 44.2 | 0.197 |
| Passing through the sieve #80 | 50.8 | 0.240 |
| Passing through the sieve #200 | 72.0 | 0.342 |
| Clay | 83.7 | 0.420 |

Figure 2. Optical microscopy images of RGG samples immersed in different fluids.
compacted specimen (four samples at the top, four at the bottom and eight samples at the middle portion of the specimen). Table 4 summarizes the obtained results from EDX tests. It can be observed that silicon, aluminum, and iron are the main oxides found in the RGG specimens, comprising 98.86% ± 0.09 of all detected oxides. TiO₂, BaO, SO₃, MnO and ZrO₂ are the main remaining oxides in the samples (1.14% ± 0.13). The SiO₂/Al₂O₃ ratio was about 1.15, indicating the predominance of the kaolinite mineral group (1:1 structure).

### 2.2 Materials - fluids

Water, diesel, and ethanol were the interstitial fluids used in this study. Their density, viscosity and superficial tension were determined in the laboratory. A Krüis Easy-dyne Tensiometer, k20 model, was used for superficial tension determination. Temperature was controlled using a Brookfield bath, TC-550 model. Fluids were tested at 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 °C. Once the temperature of equilibrium was reached, the densities of the fluids were determined using a standard volume of known density which was immersed in the fluid sample. After that, fluid superficial tension was determined using the ring method (ASTM D 971, 2012). A Brookfield viscometer, DV2T model, was used for the viscosity tests, which were performed at the same temperatures cited above (ASTM D 4016, 2014). Table 5 summarizes the obtained results for density, viscosity, and superficial tension of the fluids at 20 °C. More results are available in Almeida (2016).

### 2.3 Materials - soil-fluid interactions

Soil liquid retention curves, were determined in order to evaluate soil/fluid interactions. Compacted soil specimens (normal Proctor energy) at the optimum water content were used. The following techniques were used for suction control/measurement: direct suction measurement with tensiometers (water), adapted pressure plate (water, diesel), Richard’s pressure chamber (water, diesel and ethanol) and filter paper (water). Tests were performed according to ASTM D 6836 (ASTM, 2008) and ASTM C 5298 (ASTM, 1994) when applicable. Figure 3 summarizes the results.

Experimental results were fitted by Equation 3, proposed by Fredlund & Xing (1994). For the sake of comparison, some results obtained for ethanol are also shown in Figure 3(b). As can be observed, the obtained results are close to those obtained for diesel. However, no suction-controlled tests were performed using ethanol.

The main water wetting branch was obtained by completely drying the sample from the optimum water content prior to the test. In the case of the main drying water branch, samples were first saturated from the optimum water content. The tests performed with diesel and ethanol, however, required that samples were first dried, then saturated with the fluid of interest, and finally left to dry by suction imposition. Because completely drying the samples induces non recoverable reduction in their void ratios, the experimental results are not completely comparable. Table 6 presents the main fitting parameters of the experimental results by Equation 3.

![Figure 3. Retention curves for different fluids. Experimental data fitting using the Fredlund & Xing (1994) equation.](image-url)
where $\theta$ is the volumetric content, $\theta_{sw}$ is the saturated volumetric content, $\psi$ is the suction, $\psi_r$ is the suction corresponding to residual volumetric content, $e$ is the base of the natural logarithm, and $a$, $n$ and $m$ are fitting parameters.

3. Methods

3.1 Triaxial tests

Triaxial tests were performed on compacted samples (50 mm $\times$ 100 mm, nominal dimensions) in the same conditions as for SLRC tests. All tests were of the Consolidated Isotropically Drained type and performed in triplicate, by using different interstitial fluids (water, ethanol, diesel and dried soil, or air saturated). Tests were performed on saturated samples, with suction control or at a “constant” fluid content.

As all specimens were compacted at optimum water content in order to allow the use of different interstitial fluids, they were dried at atmospheric conditions (conditioned temperature room) for five days and then oven-dried at 70 °C for two days. Specimens were compacted in one single compaction batch. All the specimens were randomly chosen to be tested after compaction and drying procedures. Tests performed with saturated samples employed upward flow and back pressure saturation techniques ($B \geq 0.90$, where $B$ is the Skempton’s parameter). Specimens to be tested with suction control were first immersed after drying in the fluid of interest, water, ethanol or diesel, for at least 2 days and then taken to a Richard’s chamber to impose the desired suction for at least 15 days. Finally, the specimens were transferred to a triaxial chamber (use of a high air entry value, HAEV, of 1,500 kPa in the chamber base) and the desired top, base and confining pressures were applied, adopting a net confining pressure of about $\sigma - u_c = 20$ kPa. Two more days were allowed for suction stabilization before triaxial tests began. Suction-controlled tests were performed (use of axis translation technique) employing suction values of 100 kPa, 200 kPa and 300 kPa. Air (top) and water (base) pressures were kept constant during all the tests.

In the case of the tests performed keeping a constant fluid content, the specimens were taken directly to the triaxial chamber after drying. The confining pressures adopted in the triaxial tests were 50 kPa, 100 kPa, 200 kPa and 400 kPa for tests with saturated/constant fluid content samples, and 50 kPa, 100 kPa, and 200 kPa for suction-controlled tests. Volume change readings of saturated specimens were performed employing the water pressure lines (top and base) and a volume change gauge. In the suction-controlled tests the fluid drainage of the specimens was performed by the triaxial chamber base and the volume change gauge was connected to the confining pressure line (externally made volume change measurements with chamber compressibility correction). The same procedure was used for the “constant” fluid content tests. In this case however, the top and base lines were open to the atmosphere to avoid excess pore water pressure generation. A PVC film with a small hole was used in the fluid exits to prevent evaporation. No fluid was observed being expelled from the specimens during the tests.

Axial Force and displacement measurements were performed externally to the triaxial chamber. Shearing rates were adopted taking into consideration the consolidation rate and the HAEV porous stone impedance in suction-controlled tests. All tests were performed by keeping the confining stress during the shearing phase constant. Tables 7 to 9 summarize the initial and final physical indexes.

| Procedure          | $\theta_{sw}$ (%) | $\psi_r$ (%) | $\psi_r$ (kPa) | $a$ | $m$ | $n$ | $R^2$ |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Main drying water  | 48.21            | 4.01        | 25 000       | 4929| 3.98| 1.20| 0.99  |
| Main wetting water | 42.52            | 2.50        | 20 000       | 1818| 3.80| 1.05| 0.90  |
| Main drying diesel | 42.51            | 2.50        | 20 000       | 2000| 3.50| 0.95| 0.98  |

Table 6. Fitting parameters of experimental results by Equation 3.

| Fluid          | Confining stress (kPa) | $\gamma_s$ (kN/m$^3$) | $w$ (%) | CD (%) | $n$ | $w$ (%) | Saturated samples | After molding | $n$ | After test | $n$ |
|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------|--------|-----|---------|------------------|--------------|-----|----------|-----|
| Water          | 50                     | 14.46                 | 30.69   | 108.37 | 0.46| 1.16    | 1.16             | 0.39         | 27.99| 0.43     |
|                | 100                    | 14.31                 | 30.43   | 107.27 | 0.47| 1.24    | 1.24             | 0.39         | 27.17| 0.42     |
|                | 200                    | 14.66                 | 29.94   | 109.92 | 0.46| 2.36    | 2.36             | 0.39         | 26.36| 0.42     |
|                | 400                    | 14.64                 | 30.29   | 109.77 | 0.46| 1.72    | 1.72             | 0.39         | 26.45| 0.42     |

Table 7. Average physical indexes. Saturated samples.
The influence of the fluid dielectric constant on the shear strength of a unsaturated soil

Table 7 (cont.)

| Fluid | Confining stress (kPa) | Compaction | Saturated samples |
|-------|------------------------|------------|------------------|
|       |                        | $\gamma_c$ (kN/m$^3$) | $w$ (%) | CD (%) | $n$ | $w$ (%) | n | n |
|       |                        | $w$ (%) | CD (%) | $n$ | After molding | After test |
| Ethanol | 50 | 14.07 | 32.83 | 105.47 | 0.48 | 3.10 | 0.40 | 22.12 | 0.42 |
|        | 100 | 14.04 | 32.66 | 104.94 | 0.48 | 2.73 | 0.41 | 22.50 | 0.42 |
|        | 200 | 14.01 | 32.51 | 105.05 | 0.48 | 2.71 | 0.39 | 22.14 | 0.42 |
|        | 400 | 14.09 | 32.18 | 105.62 | 0.48 | 3.87 | 0.41 | 22.24 | 0.42 |
| Diesel | 50 | 13.96 | 33.22 | 104.62 | 0.48 | 2.24 | 0.41 | 20.60 | 0.40 |
|        | 100 | 13.98 | 33.52 | 104.82 | 0.48 | 4.27 | 0.41 | 20.18 | 0.40 |
|        | 200 | 14.23 | 33.36 | 106.67 | 0.47 | 4.23 | 0.41 | 19.18 | 0.39 |
|        | 400 | 14.12 | 33.20 | 105.82 | 0.48 | 4.01 | 0.42 | 20.17 | 0.40 |
| Air    | 50 | 14.01 | 33.65 | 105.00 | 0.48 | 3.13 | 0.41 | 3.13 | 0.41 |
|        | 100 | 14.00 | 32.66 | 104.97 | 0.48 | 2.38 | 0.41 | 2.38 | 0.41 |
|        | 200 | 14.04 | 33.05 | 105.27 | 0.48 | 2.47 | 0.41 | 2.47 | 0.41 |
|        | 400 | 14.08 | 32.33 | 105.57 | 0.48 | 1.91 | 0.40 | 1.91 | 0.40 |

Obs: CD is the compaction degree of the sample.

Table 8. Average physical indexes. Suction controlled samples.

| Fluid  | Suction (kPa) | Confining stress (kPa) | Compaction | After suction equalization |
|--------|---------------|------------------------|------------|---------------------------|
|        | $\gamma_c$ (kN/m$^3$) | $w$ (%) | CD (%) | $n$ | $w$ (%) | n | Sr (%) |
| Water  | 100 | 50 | 14.43 | 30.68 | 108.17 | 0.47 | 29.80 | 0.46 | 94.58 |
|        | 100 | 14.42 | 30.27 | 108.10 | 0.47 | 31.53 | 0.46 | 98.63 |
|        | 200 | 14.32 | 30.26 | 107.37 | 0.47 | 30.62 | 0.47 | 95.30 |
| Diesel | 100 | 50 | 14.41 | 28.92 | 108.05 | 0.47 | 19.04 | 0.40 | 90.87 |
|        | 100 | 14.50 | 29.37 | 108.67 | 0.46 | 19.30 | 0.40 | 92.57 |
|        | 200 | 14.55 | 29.46 | 109.07 | 0.46 | 18.82 | 0.41 | 89.58 |
| Water  | 200 | 50 | 14.51 | 29.31 | 108.77 | 0.46 | 29.33 | 0.45 | 95.84 |
|        | 100 | 14.60 | 26.68 | 109.42 | 0.46 | 30.29 | 0.46 | 96.42 |
|        | 200 | 14.35 | 30.74 | 107.57 | 0.47 | 29.57 | 0.46 | 95.42 |
| Ethanol| 200 | 50 | 14.53 | 30.63 | 108.90 | 0.46 | 18.96 | 0.41 | 86.25 |
|        | 100 | 14.60 | 30.08 | 109.47 | 0.46 | 18.34 | 0.40 | 89.33 |
|        | 200 | 14.60 | 30.42 | 109.42 | 0.46 | 18.96 | 0.40 | 89.10 |
| Diesel | 200 | 50 | 14.47 | 29.30 | 108.50 | 0.46 | 17.99 | 0.40 | 90.39 |
|        | 100 | 14.50 | 29.41 | 108.67 | 0.46 | 17.79 | 0.40 | 87.17 |
|        | 200 | 14.47 | 29.52 | 108.45 | 0.47 | 17.95 | 0.40 | 87.46 |
| Water  | 300 | 50 | 14.21 | 31.06 | 106.52 | 0.47 | 28.92 | 0.47 | 90.69 |
|        | 100 | 14.31 | 30.68 | 107.30 | 0.47 | 28.27 | 0.47 | 90.94 |
|        | 200 | 14.25 | 30.85 | 106.82 | 0.47 | 29.56 | 0.47 | 90.66 |
| Ethanol| 300 | 50 | 14.32 | 31.27 | 107.37 | 0.47 | 18.59 | 0.40 | 88.57 |
|        | 100 | 14.31 | 30.95 | 107.27 | 0.47 | 19.13 | 0.42 | 85.17 |
Table 9. Average physical indexes. Constant water content.

| Sr average (%) | Confining stress (kPa) | Compaction | After suction equalization |
|----------------|------------------------|------------|---------------------------|
|                | Confining stress (kPa) |            | 200 | 14.38 | 30.27 | 107.77 | 0.47 | 18.39 | 0.41 | 82.52 |
|                |                        |            | 75  | 14.39 | 29.43 | 107.87 | 0.47 | 17.84 | 0.40 | 86.20 |
| 14             | 100                    |            | 14.31 | 29.95 | 107.27 | 0.47 | 17.38 | 0.40 | 83.96 |
|                |                        |            | 14.38 | 29.44 | 107.80 | 0.47 | 17.22 | 0.41 | 83.87 |
| 28             | 50                     |            | 14.42 | 30.69 | 108.10 | 3.49 | 0.40 | 14.16 |
|                | 100                    |            | 14.28 | 31.67 | 107.05 | 3.43 | 0.40 | 13.91 |
|                | 200                    |            | 14.76 | 30.80 | 110.64 | 3.49 | 0.40 | 14.16 |
|                | 400                    |            | 14.58 | 30.59 | 109.30 | 3.16 | 0.40 | 12.82 |
| 42             | 50                     |            | 14.19 | 30.82 | 106.37 | 6.77 | 0.39 | 28.63 |
|                | 100                    |            | 14.30 | 31.59 | 107.20 | 6.58 | 0.39 | 27.83 |
|                | 200                    |            | 14.58 | 30.11 | 109.30 | 6.34 | 0.39 | 26.81 |
|                | 400                    |            | 14.52 | 31.07 | 108.85 | 6.52 | 0.39 | 27.58 |
| 54             | 50                     |            | 14.58 | 28.86 | 109.30 | 9.32 | 0.38 | 41.12 |
|                | 100                    |            | 14.19 | 31.60 | 106.37 | 10.05 | 0.39 | 42.50 |
|                | 200                    |            | 14.08 | 30.76 | 105.55 | 10.21 | 0.39 | 43.18 |
|                | 400                    |            | 14.49 | 30.74 | 108.62 | 9.60 | 0.39 | 40.60 |
| 66             | 50                     |            | 14.65 | 29.03 | 109.82 | 12.59 | 0.38 | 55.54 |
|                | 100                    |            | 14.43 | 30.66 | 108.17 | 12.96 | 0.39 | 54.81 |
|                | 200                    |            | 14.30 | 31.43 | 107.20 | 13.14 | 0.40 | 53.30 |
|                | 400                    |            | 14.53 | 31.08 | 108.92 | 12.74 | 0.39 | 53.88 |
| 81             | 50                     |            | 14.52 | 30.55 | 108.85 | 15.86 | 0.41 | 61.71 |
|                | 100                    |            | 14.52 | 30.44 | 108.85 | 15.95 | 0.39 | 67.46 |
|                | 200                    |            | 14.29 | 31.13 | 107.12 | 16.50 | 0.39 | 69.78 |
|                | 400                    |            | 14.60 | 29.65 | 109.45 | 15.60 | 0.39 | 65.98 |
| 87             | 50                     |            | 14.53 | 30.01 | 108.92 | 19.01 | 0.39 | 80.40 |
|                | 100                    |            | 14.67 | 29.84 | 109.97 | 18.64 | 0.39 | 78.83 |
|                | 200                    |            | 14.21 | 31.50 | 106.52 | 19.88 | 0.39 | 84.08 |
|                | 400                    |            | 14.41 | 30.93 | 108.02 | 19.39 | 0.39 | 82.01 |
| 94             | 50                     |            | 14.55 | 29.92 | 109.07 | 22.16 | 0.41 | 86.23 |
|                | 100                    |            | 14.51 | 30.61 | 108.77 | 22.33 | 0.41 | 86.89 |
|                | 200                    |            | 14.40 | 31.11 | 107.95 | 22.76 | 0.41 | 88.56 |
|                | 400                    |            | 14.47 | 30.51 | 108.47 | 25.68 | 0.42 | 95.89 |

Obs: CD is the compaction degree of the sample.
of the samples used in the triaxial tests. When applicable, tests followed the ASTM C 5298 (ASTM, 1994) standard.

4. Results and discussion

Figures 4 and 5 present typical stress/strain curves for the diesel and water saturated samples and suction controlled tests ($\psi = 300$ kPa) whereas Table 10 summarizes the obtained shear strength parameters for all the performed suction-controlled tests. The standard deviation of the experimental results around the fitted shear strength envelope, $S_y$ and the coefficient of determination, $R^2$ are also shown. As can be observed, saturated diesel samples presented an over-consolidated behavior, reaching failure at low axial strains (2-4 %). Regarding the suction-controlled tests, this tendency is even more evident, with samples presenting brittle or fragile behavior.

Results presented in Table 10 were used to plot the graphs presented in Figures 6 and 7. Besides the expected shear strength envelope, the limits for the 95 % confidence interval (expected value ±1.96 $S_y$) are also presented in the figures. For the sake of comparison, Y axis scale was maintained the same for all the obtained results.

![Figure 4. Stress/strain curves for saturated samples. $\sigma_s = 100$ kPa.](image)

| Conditions | Fluid | $\varepsilon_s$ | Suction (kPa) | $c'$ (kPa) | $\phi'$ (graus) | $S_y$ (kPa) | $R^2$ |
|------------|-------|----------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|------------|-------|
| Saturated | Water | 80.00 | 0 | 111.60 | 32.70 | 12.52 | 0.99 |
| | Alcohol | 24.3 | 0 | 137.40 | 39.60 | 21.67 | 0.99 |
| | Diesel | 2.13 | 0 | 344.30 | 39.00 | 51.54 | 0.95 |
| | Air | 1.00 | 0 | 466.20 | 48.50 | 34.53 | 0.99 |
| Unsaturated | Water | 74.65 | 100 | 133.10 | 14.10 | 6.61 | 0.85 |
| | | 74.27 | 200 | 198.00 | 11.10 | 6.89 | 0.85 |
| | | 67.41 | 300 | 286.60 | 8.90 | 6.81 | 0.83 |
| | Diesel | 2.01 | 100 | 159.70 | 54.20 | 36.81 | 0.98 |
| | | 1.98 | 200 | 238.10 | 49.60 | 32.08 | 0.97 |
| | | 1.93 | 300 | 169.50 | 53.80 | 46.23 | 0.96 |
It can be observed in Table 10 that in all the tests the shear strength decreases as the fluid polarity increases (air → diesel → alcohol and water, see Table 10). Figure 8 presents the shear strength values (deviator stress at failure,
The influence of the fluid dielectric constant on the shear strength of a unsaturated soil

$q_v$) of the soil considering a confining stress of 200 kPa as a function of the fluid dielectric constant. For the case of unsaturated samples, the fluid dielectric constant was estimated through Equation 4.

\[
\sqrt{e_{\text{eff}}} = S_r \sqrt{e_{\text{eff}}} + (1 - S_r) \sqrt{e_{\text{air}}}
\]  

(4)

where $e_{\text{eff}}$ - Relative dielectric constant of the interstitial fluid; $S_r$ - Liquid degree of saturation; $e_{\text{air}}$ - Relative dielec-

Figure 7. Shear strength envelopes for suction controlled tests.
Relative dielectric constant of the soil interstitial liquid (see Table 1); $\varepsilon_{rliq}$ - Relative dielectric constant of the air (~1).

It is evident that despite data scattering, $q_f$ decreases with an increase in $\varepsilon_{r}$ Tables 11 to 13 summarize the obtained results for all the performed tests. As tests were performed in triplicate, the presented results are average values. Figure 9 presents the obtained results in terms of the ratio $q_f/q_{fw}$ vs. $(\varepsilon_{rliq} - \varepsilon_{rf})$. The parameters $q_f$ and the $q_{fw}$ correspond to the values of $q_f$ at failure for tests performed with a fluid of interest (air, ethanol or diesel) and the fluid of reference (water). The parameters $\varepsilon_{rliq}$ and $\varepsilon_{rf}$ are the relative dielectric constants of the interstitial liquid and interstitial fluid (liquid + air) respectively. They are equal in saturated tests but differ in unsaturated ones. The parameter $\varepsilon_{ro}$ is the

Table 11. Results and values adopted for the parameters of interest. Saturated samples.

| Fluid      | Sr (%) | $\sigma'_r$ (kPa) | $q_f$ (kPa) | $q_{fw}$ (kPa) | $q_f/q_{fw}$ | $\varepsilon_{rliq}$ | $\varepsilon_f$ | $\varepsilon_{rliq} - \varepsilon_f$ | $T_s$ (10$^{-1}$ N/m) |
|------------|--------|------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Air        | 0      | 50               | 1280.93     | 252.78         | 5.07         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 0      | 100              | 1579.76     | 334.99         | 4.72         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 0      | 200              | 1842.70     | 453.06         | 4.07         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 0      | 400              | 2206.13     | 665.36         | 3.32         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
| Diesel     | 100    | 50               | 734.27      | 252.78         | 2.90         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 100              | 877.25      | 334.99         | 2.62         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 200              | 1108.69     | 453.06         | 2.45         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 400              | 1210.01     | 665.36         | 1.82         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
| Ethanol    | 100    | 50               | 389.54      | 252.78         | 1.54         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 100              | 470.73      | 334.99         | 1.41         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 200              | 635.95      | 453.06         | 1.40         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 400              | 971.00      | 665.36         | 1.46         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
| Water      | 100    | 50               | 252.78      | 252.78         | 1.00         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 100              | 334.99      | 334.99         | 1.00         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 200              | 453.06      | 453.06         | 1.00         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |
|            | 100    | 400              | 665.36      | 665.36         | 1.00         | 1.00                | 1.00          | 79.00                           | 70.75            |

Table 12. Results and values adopted for the parameters of interest. Suction controlled tests.

| Fluid      | Sr (%) | $\sigma'_r$ (kPa) | $q_f$ (kPa) | $q_{fw}$ (kPa) | $q_f/q_{fw}$ | $\varepsilon_{rliq}$ | $\varepsilon_f$ | $\varepsilon_{rliq} - \varepsilon_f$ | $T_s$ (10$^{-1}$ N/m) |
|------------|--------|------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Water      | 96.17  | 50               | 192.74      | 107.25         | 1.80         | 80.00               | 74.65         | 5.35                            | 70.75            |
|            | 96.17  | 100              | 201.95      | 144.92         | 1.39         | 80.00               | 74.65         | 5.35                            | 70.75            |
|            | 96.17  | 200              | 232.42      | 247.44         | 0.98         | 80.00               | 74.65         | 5.35                            | 70.75            |
|            | 95.89  | 50               | 248.36      | 107.25         | 2.32         | 80.00               | 74.27         | 5.73                            | 70.75            |
|            | 95.89  | 100              | 269.99      | 144.92         | 1.86         | 80.00               | 74.27         | 5.73                            | 70.75            |
|            | 95.89  | 200              | 285.66      | 247.44         | 1.15         | 80.00               | 74.27         | 5.73                            | 70.75            |
|            | 90.76  | 50               | 344.36      | 107.25         | 3.21         | 80.00               | 67.41         | 12.59                           | 70.75            |
|            | 90.76  | 100              | 354.48      | 144.92         | 2.34         | 80.00               | 67.41         | 12.59                           | 70.75            |
The influence of the fluid dielectric constant on the shear strength of a unsaturated soil

Table 12 (cont.)

| Fluid | Sr (%) | $\sigma^*$ (kPa) | $q_f$ (kPa) | $q_w$ (kPa) | $q_f/q_w$ | $\epsilon_{w_s}$ | $\epsilon_f$ | $\epsilon_{w_s} - \epsilon_f$ | $T_s^*$ (10^3 N/m) |
|-------|--------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| Diesel | 90.76  | 200             | 370.78      | 247.44      | 1.50      | 80.00          | 67.41       | 12.59            | 70.75            |
|       | 91.01  | 50              | 776.18      | 252.78      | 3.07      | 2.13           | 2.01        | 77.99            | 25.98            |
|       | 91.01  | 100             | 984.79      | 334.99      | 2.94      | 2.13           | 2.01        | 77.99            | 25.98            |
|       | 91.01  | 200             | 1251.81     | 453.06      | 2.76      | 2.13           | 2.01        | 77.99            | 25.98            |
|       | 88.34  | 50              | 852.85      | 252.78      | 3.38      | 2.13           | 1.98        | 78.02            | 25.98            |
|       | 88.34  | 100             | 1028.67     | 334.99      | 3.07      | 2.13           | 1.98        | 78.02            | 25.98            |
|       | 88.34  | 200             | 1200.92     | 453.06      | 2.65      | 2.13           | 1.98        | 78.02            | 25.98            |
|       | 84.68  | 50              | 992.82      | 334.99      | 2.96      | 2.13           | 1.93        | 78.07            | 25.98            |
|       | 84.68  | 100             | 1124.31     | 453.06      | 2.84      | 2.13           | 1.93        | 78.07            | 25.98            |

Table 13. Results and values adopted for the parameters of concern. Constant moisture content tests.

| Fluid | Sr (%) | $\sigma^*$ (kPa) | $q_f$ (kPa) | $q_w$ (kPa) | $q_f/q_w$ | $\epsilon_{w_s}$ | $\epsilon_f$ | $\epsilon_{w_s} - \epsilon_f$ | $T_s^*$ (10^3 N/m) |
|-------|--------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| Water | 13.76  | 50              | 1160.45     | 252.78      | 4.59      | 80.00          | 4.38        | 75.62            | 70.75            |
|       | 13.76  | 100             | 1348.66     | 334.99      | 4.03      | 80.00          | 4.38        | 75.62            | 70.75            |
|       | 13.76  | 200             | 1701.44     | 453.06      | 3.76      | 80.00          | 4.38        | 75.62            | 70.75            |
|       | 27.71  | 50              | 1148.97     | 252.78      | 4.55      | 80.00          | 10.25       | 69.75            | 70.75            |
|       | 27.71  | 100             | 1430.24     | 334.99      | 4.27      | 80.00          | 10.25       | 69.75            | 70.75            |
|       | 27.71  | 200             | 1700.85     | 453.06      | 3.75      | 80.00          | 10.25       | 69.75            | 70.75            |
|       | 41.85  | 50              | 1303.61     | 252.78      | 5.16      | 80.00          | 18.70       | 61.30            | 70.75            |
|       | 41.85  | 100             | 1561.52     | 334.99      | 4.66      | 80.00          | 18.70       | 61.30            | 70.75            |
|       | 41.85  | 200             | 1779.64     | 453.06      | 3.93      | 80.00          | 18.70       | 61.30            | 70.75            |
|       | 41.85  | 400             | 1850.89     | 665.36      | 2.78      | 80.00          | 18.70       | 61.30            | 70.75            |
|       | 54.38  | 100             | 1596.87     | 334.99      | 4.77      | 80.00          | 28.30       | 51.70            | 70.75            |
|       | 54.38  | 200             | 1822.47     | 453.06      | 4.02      | 80.00          | 28.30       | 51.70            | 70.75            |
|       | 54.38  | 400             | 1842.35     | 665.36      | 2.77      | 80.00          | 28.30       | 51.70            | 70.75            |
|       | 66.23  | 100             | 1699.06     | 334.99      | 5.07      | 80.00          | 39.21       | 40.79            | 70.75            |
|       | 66.23  | 200             | 1760.00     | 453.06      | 3.88      | 80.00          | 39.21       | 40.79            | 70.75            |
|       | 66.23  | 400             | 1996.85     | 665.36      | 3.00      | 80.00          | 39.21       | 40.79            | 70.75            |
|       | 81.33  | 100             | 1682.78     | 334.99      | 5.02      | 80.00          | 55.67       | 24.33            | 70.75            |
|       | 81.33  | 200             | 1708.47     | 453.06      | 3.77      | 80.00          | 55.67       | 24.33            | 70.75            |
|       | 81.33  | 400             | 1735.06     | 665.36      | 2.61      | 80.00          | 55.67       | 24.33            | 70.75            |
|       | 87.23  | 50              | 466.07      | 107.25      | 4.35      | 80.00          | 62.88       | 17.12            | 70.75            |
|       | 87.23  | 100             | 493.51      | 144.92      | 3.41      | 80.00          | 62.88       | 17.12            | 70.75            |
|       | 87.23  | 200             | 618.72      | 247.44      | 2.50      | 80.00          | 62.88       | 17.12            | 70.75            |
|       | 87.23  | 400             | 629.94      | 382.02      | 1.65      | 80.00          | 62.88       | 17.12            | 70.75            |
|       | 94.37  | 50              | 293.37      | 107.25      | 2.74      | 80.00          | 72.20       | 7.80             | 70.75            |
|       | 94.37  | 100             | 349.78      | 144.92      | 2.41      | 80.00          | 72.20       | 7.80             | 70.75            |
|       | 94.37  | 200             | 324.96      | 247.44      | 1.31      | 80.00          | 72.20       | 7.80             | 70.75            |
|       | 94.37  | 400             | 379.31      | 382.02      | 0.99      | 80.00          | 72.20       | 7.80             | 70.75            |
relative dielectric constant of water and $T_s$ is the superficial tension at the liquid/air interface.

An attempt to build an empirical model for the experimental results presented in Tables 11 to 13 was performed. Several parameters were tested as dependent and independent variables using linear and nonlinear functions to reach the higher $R^2$ value. Better fitted results were obtained using the ratio $q/q_w$ as dependent variable. $(e_{rw} - e_f)(\sigma_{\text{int}}/\sigma')$, $(T/T_{sw})$ and $(e_{rw} - e_f)(\sigma_{\text{int}}/\sigma')$ were used as independent variables. The ratio $(T/T_{sw})$ was introduced in the modeling because the superficial tension interferes in the capillary suction and therefore in the suction values, mainly at low suction levels.

Equation 5 presents the model used for the prediction of the ratio $q/q_w$ as a function of the variables cited above.

$$
\frac{q_f}{q_{f_w}} = \left( e_{rw} - e_f \right) \frac{T_{sf}}{T_{sw}} \left( \frac{\sigma_{\text{int}}}{\sigma'} \right) + a
$$

(5)

where $q_f$ is the deviator stress for samples moistened with the fluid of concern (kPa), $q_{f_w}$ is the deviator stress for samples saturated with water (kPa), $e_{rw}$ is the water relative dielectric constant (~80), $e_f$ is the relative dielectric constant of the interstitial fluid calculated using Equation 4, $\sigma_{\text{int}}$ is the atmospheric pressure (~100 kPa), $\sigma'$ is the effective or net confining stress, $T_s$ is the superficial tension of the fluid of concern (see Table 1), $T_{sw}$ is the water superficial tension, $a$ and $b$ are fitting constants.

Figure 10 presents the fitting of the experimental results presented in Figure 9 with the use of Equation 5. The best fitting parameters were $a = 3.7$ and $b = 0.16$, with a value of $R^2 = 0.88$. Experimental results could also be fitted using the suction values instead of $(e_{rw} - e_f)$. However, the SLRC for the case of ethanol presented several experimental challenges (mainly due to its high vapor pressure) which could not be overcome until now.

5. Conclusions

This paper presents the results of several triaxial tests performed on saturated and unsaturated compacted soil samples filled with different interstitial fluids. A nonlinear relationship was obtained between the shear strength of the soil and the relative dielectric constant of the interstitial fluid, $e_f$, so that the higher the $e_f$, the lower the shear strength of the soil. The explanation for such behavior is due to the fact that the polarity of the fluid affects the electric fields around the clay particles, the thickness of the double layer and thus the electrical interactions between the particles, which are increased.

An empirical model to predict soil shear strength was proposed, based on the dielectric constant of the interstitial fluid, which presented a good adherence between experimental and fitted results. The use of this model could be an option in more complex scenarios involving multi-phase problems where suction determination/estimation may not be as prompt as the dielectric constant of the interstitial fluid.

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