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Contents

Paper No.	Paper Title	Authors	Page
Prenary I	Underground Coal Gasification Development in Japan	Ken-ichi Itakura	1
Prenary II	Acid Mine Drainage Mitigation Using Industrial Byproducts	Amde M. Amde	5
A-01	Three-Dimensional Gravity Modeling for Imaging the Geothermal Reservoir Border in Eburru Geothermal Field, Kenya	Justus Maithya, Yasuhiro Fujimitsu, Jun Nishijima	13
A-02	Optimization of geothermal Binary Unit by Energy, Exergy and Sustainability Index: Comparative study of Olkaria Geothermal Field in Kenya and Chiweta Geothermal field in Malawi	Alvin Kiprono Bett, Dyson Moses, Saeid Jalilinasrabad	19
A-03	Multi-dimensional Resistivity Imaging from Magnetotellurics Data and its Geological Interpretation in Kiejo-Mbaka Geothermal Field, South-West Tanzania.	Tumbu Lucas Boniface, Hideki Mizunaga	25
A-04	Numerical Simulation of Thermosiphon's Sustainability for Estimating Energy and Cost with Closed-Loop Geothermal Power Generation Using SCCO ₂	Zhenyu Ma, Masaatsu Aichi	32
A-05	Geochemistry and origin of the host rocks of Mbesa Cu-Ni-PGE prospect, Southern Tanzania	Hidaya HASSAN, Kotaro YONEZU, Akira IMAI, Thomas TINDELL, Koichiro WATANABE	36
A-06	Mineralogy and mineral associations of platinum group elements in the ultramafic cumulates of Molopo Farms Complex at the Tubane area, southern Botswana	Jacob KAAVERA, Akira IMAI, Kotaro YONEZU, Thomas TINDELL, Kenzo SANEMATSU, Koichiro WATANABE	42
A-07	Characteristics of ore-forming fluids at the Hakurei Site, Izena Hole, middle Okinawa Trough	Yushi Sekiya, Nobuhiro Mukae, Kotaro Yonezu, Thomas Tindell, Jun-ichiro Ishibashi, Tatsuo Nozaki, Akira Imai	47
A-08	Petrography and mineralogy of tin pegmatite deposit in the Yamon-Kazat area, southern Myanmar	Hiroki Kinoshita, Kyaw Thu Htun, Kotaro Yonezu, Akira Imai	51

A-09	Relation between concentration of Sc and Ni and bedrock in Ni laterite deposit, Berong in Palawan Island, Philippines	T. Yamada, K. Yonezu, Jillian Aira S. Gabo-Ratio, R. A. Santos, Marc Raymond L. Zamora	55
A-10	Mineralogical study of chimney and mound sulfide ore at the Gondo hydrothermal field in the Okinawa Trough	Yuuki Tada, Kotaro Yonezu, Thomas Tindell, Shu-hei Totsuka, Akira Miyamoto, Jun-ichiro Ishibashi, Junichi Miyazaki, Ryo Okumura, Yuto Inuma, Koichi Takamiya	59
A-11	Geochemistry, Mineralization and Fluid Inclusion Study of The Bayan-Uul Porphyry Cu-Au-Mo Deposit, Central Mongolia	Bilegsaikhan Bolor-Erdene, Kotaro Yonezu, Akira Imai, Thomas Tindell, Jargalan Sereenen	63
A-12	Mineralization and Fluid Inclusion Microthermometry in EE3 Gold Prospect, Sagaing Region, Northern Myanmar	Htet Sandar Aung, Kotaro Yonezu, Akira Imai, Thomas Tindell, Koichiro Watanabe, May Thwe Aye	67
A-13	MINERALOGY AND GEOCHEMISTRY OF TAGUN -KHIN-DAN GOLD MINERALIZATION AREA IN SLATE BELT OF CENTRAL MYANMAR	Sai PYAE SONE, Kotaro YONEZU, AKIRA IMAI, Koichiro WATANABE, Kenzo SANEMATSU	72
A-14	Environmental impact of amino acids on the stability of layered double hydroxides bearing $^{79}\text{SeO}_2^{-4}$	Mengmeng WANG, Keiko SASAKI	78
A-15	Novel ultrasonic-assisted modulated hydrothermal synthesis of Zr-fumarate framework (MOF-801) for adsorption of antimonate in aqueous solutions: A comparison study with conventional solvothermally synthetic methods	Shunsuke Imamura, Radheshyam Rama Pawar, Keiko Sasaki	82
A-16	Suppression of anionic pollutants released from fly ash by different Ca additives and its application to cement.	Shingo NAKAMA, Keiko SASAKI, Ryoichi TAKAGI, Tadahiro KAWAHARA	85
A-17	Characterization and Flotation Separation of Bitumen from Indonesian Asbuton	Aldiyansyah, Bonita Dilasari, Ismi Handayani	89
A-18	Strontium ion (Sr^{2+}) separation from water using nanoscale zero valent iron-zeolite composite	Tamer SHUBAIR, Osama ELJAMAL	95
A-19	Experimental Study on Correlation Between Spontaneous Combustion and Surface CO_2 Flux in Abandoned Coal Mine Goaf	Yongjun WANG, Xiaoming ZHANG, Hemeng ZHANG, Wei DONG, Kyuro SASAKI	97

A-20	"Leave the Carbon in the Ground": in-situ combustion by injecting air into abandoned shale reservoirs	Kazuki Sawayama, Kewen Li, Roland Horne	103
A-21	Study of Models of Hydration Force to Calculate the Wettability of CO ₂ /Brine/Mineral System	Masashige Shiga, Masaatsu Aichi, Masao Sorai, Hiromi Honda	109
A-22	The influence of polymorphs of CaCO ₃ on CO ₂ mineralization	Yutian Zhang, Takeshi Tsuji, Fei Jiang	115
A-23	Numerical Study of the Effects of Interfacial Tension on Production of Foamy Oil by CO ₂ -gas Foaming	Sovanborey MEAKH, Chanmoly OR	118
A-24	In-Situ Gelation, Characterization and Pore Blocking Performance In Heterogeneous Reservoir	Sammeang Chea, Sasaki Kyuro, Ronald Nguele, Sugai Yuichi	124
A-25	Nanofluid Flooding for Enhanced Oil Recovery: Study on Ion Tracking of Produced Fluid	Tola Sreu, Kyuro Sasaki, Ronald Nguele, Yuchi Sugai	129
A-26	Alteration of Physical Properties of Heavy Crude oil in High Temperature Range by Adding Fine Particles	Vatana Mom, Kyuro Sasaki, Ronald Nguele, Yuichi Sugai	132
B-01	Performance of Open Fly Ash Channel: Result of Laboratory Study	Sendy Dwiki, Rudy Sayoga Gautama, Ginting Jalu Kusuma, Mohammad Salman Said	136
B-02	Study of Wetland for Management of Acid Mine Drainage on the Porphyry Copper-Gold Mine in Indonesia	Waterman Sulistyana Bargawa, Untung Sukanto, Muhammad Nurcholis, Maharani Rindu Widara, Agus Panca Adi Sucahyo	142
B-03	Geochemical Characterization of Rare Earth Elements (REE) in Acid Mine Drainage from Coal Mine	Abie Badhurahman, Rudy Sayoga Gautama, Ginting Jalu Kusuma	148
B-04	Application of Isotope Methods for Identifying Groundwater Flow Paths into Closed Mine Sites in Japan	S. Matsumoto, M. Ono, I. Machida	152
B-05	Analysis on the Geological Factors and Countermeasures of Geological Risk Events in Mountain Tunnel	Yoshio UDAGAWA	156
B-06	Study of Ground Reaction Curve (GRC) In Non-Circular Shallow Twin Tunnels Using Finite Element Methods and Convergent Measurement Results	Ali Husain TAHERDITO, Nuhandro Priagung WIDODO, Simon Heru PRASETYA, Budi SULISTIANTO, Made Astawa RAI	162

B-07	Stability Analysis of Sill Pillar on Underground Mining Sublevel Stopping with Analytical Methods	Calvin Leonard, Simon Heru Prasetyo, Ganda Marihot Simangunsong	168
B-08	Designing a Drill-and-Blast Tunnel Excavation Method to Minimize Vibration Impact on the Surrounding Structures	Ganda M. Simangunsong, Simon H. Prasetyo, Jordi Fatah	174
B-09	Subsidence Calculation Model of Different Zone after Mining Based on Optical Fiber Sensor	Meng Fanfei, Takushi Sasaoka, Hideki Shimada, Akihiro Hamanaka, Sugeng Wahyudi, Piao Chunde	178
B-10	Geochemistry and Petrography Characteristics of Magmatic Rare Earth Elements Deposit in Belitung Island with Special Reference to S-type Tanjungpandan Granite	Muhammad Dzulfikar Faruqi, Faishal Arkhamuddin, Natalia Aritionang, Angga Widya Yogatama, Sutarto	183
B-11	First Step of Gold Mining Exploration To Discovery: Determining Area of Prospect by Intersection of GIS & Geology Information	Bella Wijdani Sakina, Zulfahmi Roskha, Trifatama Rahmalia, Abdul Bari, Bronto Sutopo	191
B-12	Characteristic of Gold Mineralization of the Santoy Vein, Sangilo Mine, Baguio Mineral District, Philippines	Naoto Kugizaki, Kotaro Yonezu, Akira Imai, Jillian Aira S. Gabo-Ratio, Eric S. Andal	197
B-13	Geometry of Paleovolcanic Area Groundwater Basin System Based On Geoelectric & Geological Data in Wediombo beach and Surrounding, Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta Province	Arhananta, Avellyn Shinthya Sari, Aditya Rizky Wibowo, Agung Prayoga, Suko Prukoso, Abdul Aziz Makarim, Haikal Fadhil Pamungkas, Anggita Mahyudani Rkt, Favian AvilaRestiko	201
B-14	Analysis of Physical and Mechanical Rock Properties Based on Geological Domain in the Nickel Laterite Zones at PT Antam Tbk Site Pomalaa, Southeast Sulawesi	Fehrianti Tricahyani, Riko Ardiansyah, Barlian Dwinagara	205
B-15	An Evaluation of Excavatability Criteria for Sedimentary Rocks: A Correlation from Mechanical Properties	Oktarian W. Lusantono, Prasodo D. Prabandaru, Shofa R. Haq, Barlian Dwinagara	210
B-16	PROBABILISTIC OF PLANE FAILURE USING MONTE CARLO SIMULATION IN SLOPE STABILITY ANALYSIS WITH LIMIT EQUILIBRIUM METHOD	Muhammad Alfira Farhan, Made Astawa Rai	216

B-17	Overburden Dump Stability in Coal Open Pit Mine with Weak Coal-Bearing Strata	Tri Karian, Budi Sulistianto, Ginting Jalu Kusuma	222
B-18	Effect of Firing Pattern on the Size Distribution of Rock Fragmentation in Open Pit Mine	Takahiro SHIOMORI, Takashi SASAOKA, Sugeng WAHYUDI, Akihiro HAMANAKA, Hideki SHIMADA	228
B-19	Fundamental Study on Recycling of Returned Concrete as Ground Materials: Strength Properties of Modified Soils Produced from Returned Concrete	Ryota ICHINOHE, Tomoaki SATOMI, Hiroshi TAKAHASHI	233
B-20	Experimental Evaluation of Shear Strength Parameters of Fiber-Cement-Stabilized Soil	Kazumi RYUO, Haruka KUBOTA, Tomoaki SATOMI, Hiroshi TAKAHASHI	238
B-21	Study on Soft Soil Reinforcement by Liquefied Stabilized Soil Method using Paper Sludge Ash based Geopolymer	Vu Minh CHIEN, Tomoaki SATOMI, Hiroshi TAKAHASHI	244
B-22	Experimental Investigation of Effect of Gravel Content on Soil Failure Process and Excavating Force during Soil Excavation by Bucket	Kohei SHIOTA, Tomoaki SATOMI, Hiroshi TAKAHASHI	250
B-23	Quality improvement of Cambodian ceramic using Kandal clay incorporating with rock dust for ceramic brick	Chea Monyneath, Bun Kim Ngun	255
B-24	Revisiting the Method of Groundwater Flux Estimation from Underground Temperature Profile Considering the Joule-Thomson Effect and Gravitational Potential Energy Dissipation	Kento Akitaya, Masaatsu Aichi	261
B-25	Spatial-Temporal Analysis of Landscape Ecological Connectivity Changes in Makassar City	Nurul Masyiah Rani HARUSI, Yasuhiro MITANI, Yuki OKAJIMA, Hisatoshi TANIGUCHI	266
B-26	Relationship between land use changes during 1900-2014 and Kyushu heavy rain disaster in 2017	Lu TIAN, Yasuhiro MITANI, Yuki OKAJIMA, Satoru KIMURA, Taiga TABUCHI	273
C-01	Comparison on the Catalytic Mechanism of Activated Carbon in Bioleaching of Chalcopyrite and Enargite	Keishi Oyama, Kyohei Takamatsu, Hajime Miki, Keiko Sasaki, Naoko Okibe	280
C-02	Synergistic effects of biogenic manganese oxide and Mn(II)-oxidizing bacteria on the oxidation of arsenite	Ryohei NISHI, Santisak KITJANUKIT, Kohei Nonaka, Naoko OKIBE	282

C-03	Importance of sulfur oxidizing microorganisms for chalcopyrite bioleaching with saline water	Hanaki NOGUCHI, Naoko OKIBE	284
C-04	Sequential Bio-treatment of Carbonaceous Silver Ore	Diego M. Mendoza Flores, Kojo T. Konadu, Ryotaro Sakai and Keiko Sasaki	286
C-05	Environmental Impact of Au Artisanal Mining on Plampang River, Yogyakarta, Indonesia	Dewi Ayu Kusumaningsih, Barlian Dwinagara, Shofa Rijalul Haq	290
C-06	Heavy metal removal from aqueous solution using Na ₂ S treated sheep wool at different concentration	Solongo Enkhzaya, Koichiro Shiomori, Bolormaa Oyuntsetseg	297
C-07	How Does Organizational Culture Support Company Safety Performance, Evidence from Indonesia	Yosep Irsana, Yoshiyuki Matsuura	301
C-08	Outliers Treatment in the Grade Determination for Economic Feasibility (Case Study: Limestone Mining)	Hidayatullah Sidiq, Aldin Ardian, Shofa Rijalul Haq	307
C-09	Economic Valuation of Mining Project Using Fuzzy Real Option Method: Case Study of Underground Gold Mine	Fadhila Achmadi ROSYID, Arjo Prawoto Wibowo, Sari Uly SIBARANI, Lilik Eko WIDODO, Mohamad Nur HERIAWAN	312
C-10	Automatic Interpretation of Nankai Trough Seismic Data Using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)	Almad.B Ahmad, Takeshi Tsuji	318
C-11	SLOPE CONSERVATION IN GUCI GEOTHERMAL AREA, SLAMET MOUNTAIN, CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA BASED ON GEOLOGY AND GEOPHYSICAL DATA	Avellyn Shinthya Sari, Arhananta, Anggita Mahyudani Rkt, Sari Bahagiarti Kusumnyudha	322
C-12	Development of Magnetotelluric 1-D Sparse Inversion	Yosuke Kiyomoto, Hideki Mizunaga, Toshiaki Tanaka	328
C-13	The research on the application of Hilbert-Huang Transformation to time series magnetotelluric data	Hao Chen, Hideki Mizunaga, Toshiaki Tanaka	332
C-14	Potential Assessment of Gas hydrate and Free gas reservoir in Kumano Basin, Japan	Hiroki Matsui, Takeshi Tsuji	336
C-15	Fault detection using pre-trained Convolutional Neural Networks by synthetic seismic data	Liu Yuhan, Takeshi Tsuji	340
C-16	Development of quasi-real time monitoring system of spatial seismic velocity variation on Kyushu Island using ambient noise	Fernando Laurens Hutapea, Takeshi Tsuji, and Tatsunori Ikeda	346

C-17	Analysis of Seismic Waves from Continuous and Controlled Seismic Signal System in Kyushu Area	Ryosuke Matsuura, Tatsunori Ikeda, Takeshi Tsuji	350
C-18	Impact of Seasonal Rainfall on Crustal Pore Pressure: Insight from Monitoring of Seismic Velocity Changes	Rezkia Dewi Andajani, Takeshi Tsuji, Tatsunori Ikeda, Fernando Lawrens Hutapea	354
C-19	Water content delineation using Ground-Penetrating Radar Q Tomography	Wahyudi W. Pamadi, Djoko Santoso, Warsa Warsa	358
C-20	Comparison of the Deformation Characteristics of Lowwall on Pit C2 and Pit 7 West Based On Radar Monitoring Data – PT Berau Coal	Nurbaiti Melistia Akhmadi, Ridho Kresna Wattimena	362
C-21	An Analysis of Materials Adhesivity Level on Excavator's Bucket in Open Pit Coal Mining	Prasodo D. Prabandara, Tubagus Hendarto, Oktarian W. Lusantono, Barlian Dwinagara, Shofa Rijalul Haq	368
C-22	Analyses of Seasonal Temperature Difference in Underground Surrounding Rocks - Field Verifications	Jianwei Cheng	374
C-23	Visible-Shortwave Infrared Reflectance Spectroscopy Features of Samples from Mamuju, Indonesia Containing Radioactive Minerals	Arie Naftali Hawu Hede, Yogi Priyana, Syafrizal, Mohamad Nur Heriawan, Heri Syaeful	380
P-01	Coal Geology and Coal Depositional Environmental of Keban Area, Lahat Sub-District, South Sumatera, Indonesia	Basuki RAHMAD, Sugeng RAHARJO, EDIYANTO, Fadhil ZUHDI, Indra DARMAWAN	384
P-02	The Affect Coal Facies to the Adsorption of Methane Gas in Coal of Tanjung Formation at Arangalus Area, South Kalimantan Province, Indonesia	Sugeng, Sari BAHAGIARTI, Heru SIGIT PURWANTO, Basuki RAHMAD	389
P-03	Numerical Analysis on Retained – GOAF Side – Gate Road in a Weak Rock Properties of Longwall Coal Mine	Harry KUSUMA, Takashi SASAOKA, Hideki SHIMADA, Akihiro HAMANAKA, Pisith MAO, Sugeng WAHYUDI	394
P-04	Preliminary Study of Mine Closure for Underground Mines in Myanmar	Cho Thae On, Takashi SASAOKA, Hideki SHIMADA, Akihiro HAMAKA, Sugeng WAHYUDI, Tun Naing	400

P-05	Investigation on Slope Stability of Internal Dump of the "Baganuur" Open Pit Mine in Mongolia	Bilguun Enkhbold, Hideki Shimada, Takashi Sasaoka, Akihiro Hamanaka, Sugeng Wahyudi	404
P-06	Numerical Study on Rock-Breaking Effect of Shield Hob in Contact Surface of Upper Soft and Lower Hard Strata	Cheng-long Guo, Xin Zhou, Qing Yu, Hideki Shimada	407
P-07	Design of Contiguous Pile Wall and Lateral Supporting System for Deep Excavation at Chroy Changva Region, Phnom Penh City, Cambodia	Tongsan LANN, Chandoeun ENG, Vuthy HORNG	413
P-08	Upgrading the quality of Cambodian ceramic using Kampong Cham clay incorporating with rock dust for ceramic roof tile	Idol PHANN, BUN Kim Ngun	419
P-09	Gas Production Characteristics and Plasma-Desulfurization in Hybrid Underground Coal Gasification (H-UCG) System	Kazuhiko TAKAHASHI, Ken-ichi ITAKURA, Akihiro HAMANAKA, Gota DEGUCHI, Jun-ichi KODAMA	425
P-10	Oil Migration Counteracting Against Chemical Osmosis in Stagnant Pores: A Potential Mechanism of Low Salinity Waterflooding	Mikio Takeda, Mitsuo Manaka, Yoshito Nakashima	427
P-11	Strategies and problems of groundwater monitoring in radioactive waste disposals	Kazumasa Ito	431
P-12	Characterization and acid leaching behavior of spent Mo/Co-catalyst	Yu TANAKA, Naoko OKIBE	435
P-13	Recovery of Ilmenite from Sand Using Wet High-Intensity Magnetic Separator (WHIMS)	Lytheng THORNG, Nallis KRY, Somsak SAISINCHAI	437
P-14	Study of selective flotation of copper sulfide and As containing copper minerals	Yuta Orii, Gde Pandbe Wisnu Suryantara, Hajime Miki, Keiko Sasaki, Tsuyoshi Hirajima, Shigeto Kuroiwa, Yuji Aoki	443
P-15	Decontamination of zinc leach residues by recovering lead and zinc: An approach of concurrent dissolution and cementation using chloride solution and aluminum powder	Marthias SILWAMBA, Ryota HASHIZUME, Ilwan PARK, Sanghee JEON, Meki CHIRWA, Kawawa BANDA, Imasiku NYAMBE, Carlino Baltazar TABELIN, Mayumi ITO, Naoki HIROYOSHI	445

P-16	The effects of co-existing metal ions on the recovery of gold from ammonium thiosulfate solutions using aluminum and activated carbon	Sanghee Jeon, Sharrydon Bright, Ilhwan Park, Mayumi Ito, Naoki Hiroyoshi	449
P-17	Selective coating for improving MoS ₂ /CuFeS ₂ Flotation	Ilhwan Park, Seunggwon Hong, Mayumi Ito, Naoki Hiroyoshi	452
P-18	Polymerization state of silicic acid adsorbed on anion exchange resin ²⁹ Si MAS NMR relaxation time	Takaaki Chuuman, Kimosuke Eguchi, Marina Akinaga, Daisuke Kawamoto, Kotaro Yonezu, Koichiro Watanabe, Takushi Yokoyama	455
P-19	Landsat 8 and Airborne Geophysical Data Interpretations to Investigate the Radioactivity Hazards at El Gilf El Kiber Area, South Western Desert, Egypt	Tamer Farag, Nehal Soliman, Atef El Shayat, Hidki Mizunaga	458
P-20	A study on detection of anomalous groundwater level using Machine Learning	Soshi KAMITAKI, Yasuhiro FUJIMITSU, Jun NISHIJIMA, Tatsuya WAKEYAMA	462
P-21	The Understanding of Volcanoclastics Model in Tebing Breksi Geotourism By Digital Outcrop Model	Muchamad Ocky Bayu NUGROHO, Muhamad SYAIFUDIN, Bambang YUWONO, Basuki RAHMAD	466
P-22	Identification of Characteristics Tsunami Pacitan Bay, East Java Province, Indonesia Based on Surface and Subsurface Data	Dissa Firlina Aya Chania, Alviani Permatasari, Arhananta, Aditya Rizky Wibowo, Yuli Wibowo	470
P-23	Structural Control of Gunungsewu Karst Landform Based on Geomorphological Aspect Guide	Favian Tiko, Nazwa Khoiratun Hisan, Arhananta, Bambang Kuncoro Prasongko	476
P-24	Tectonic history in Hidaka-oki basin and Sanriku-oki basin estimated by sedimentation rates using 3D seismic reflection data	Kosuke Takahashi, Takeshi Tsuji	480
P-25	An Enhanced Edge Detection Technique for Potential Field Data; Case Study of Western USA	Mohammad SHEHATA, Hideki MIZUNAGA	484
P-26	Resistivity measurement technique using capacitor electrodes	Soichiro Hashimoto, Toshiaki Tanaka, Hideki Mizunaga	488
P-27	Subsurface Void Investigation using Ground Penetrating Radar in the Garuda Wisnu Kencana (GWK) Bali	Warsa Warsa, Jeoreinhard Munandar, IB Suandana Yogi	492

P-28	Non-linear inversion study for long grounded wire TDEM Data	Warsa Warsa, Rai Sudha Prabawa	496
P-29	Study on elucidation of hydrothermal system around Shishimuta caldera	Ryo TODA, Yasuhiro FUJIMITSU, Jun NISHIJIMA	501
P-30	Research on improving accuracy of heat discharge estimation system by observing fumarolic gas	Tetsuya YAMAMOTO, Yasuhiro FUJIMITSU, Jun NISHIJIMA	504
P-31	Subsurface structure analysis in Beppu area by gravity survey to clarify of hot spring eruption mechanism	Ryosuke TSUTSUI, Jun NISHIJIMA, Yasuhiro FUJIMITSU	508
P-32	Monitoring geothermal reservoir by measuring gravity change in Ogiri geothermal area	Kentaro SHIMODA, Jun NISHIJIMA, Yasuhiro FUJIMITSU	512
P-33	Geothermal Structure in the Western Part of Kirishima Volcano	Hiroki SHIMADA, Yasuhiro FUJIMITSU, Jun NISHIJIMA	516
P-34	Aluminum Species in Acidic and Neutral pH Geothermal Water	Sachi MASUNAGA, Kotaro YONEZU, Koichiro WATANABE, Takushi YOKOYAMA	520
P-35	GEOTHERMAL MANIFESTATION IDENTIFICATION IN ARJOSARI SUBDISTRICT PACITAN REGENCY, EAST JAVA PROVINCE, INDONESIA BASED ON SURFACE AND SUBSURFACE DATA	Anggita Mahyudani Rkt, Dinantina Ahyani W, Aditya Rizky Wibowo, Arhananta, Avellyn Shintya Sari	525
P-36	Geological Mapping and Interpretation of Wild Boar Prospect Area in Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia	Chantra CHHORN, Chandoeun ENG	531
P-37	Geology and fluid inclusion studies on the Shwetagan gold mineralization at Yamethin Township, Mandalay Region, central Myanmar	Myo Kyaw HLAING, Kotaro YONEZU, May Thwe AYE, Day Wa AUNG, Koichiro WATANABE	537
P-38	Physicochemical Condition of Gold Mineralization in the Masara Mine, Southeastern Mindanao, Philippines	Ryota Kokubu, Akira Imai, Kotaro Yonezu, Thomas Tindell	542
P-39	Study on Applicability of Sealing Material with Low Specific Gravity for Suction Mining of Rare-Earth Rich Mud	Yoshihiro TAGASHIRA, Takashi SASAOKA, Akihiro HAMANAKA, Hideki SHIMADA, Keisuke TAKAHASHI	546

P-40	Study of Critical Concentration on Coal Dust-Air Explosion in 10 L and 20 L Closed Chambers	Nuhindro Priagung Widodo, Ahmad Ihsan, Anggraini Widiya Astuti, Raden Muhammad Imam K., Alan Gassadesna Arisandi, Budi Sulistianto, Sugeng Wahyudi	549
P-41	Cost Estimation Model for Open-pit Nickel Mining in Indonesia	Lidana Erliandri, Sri Marlina, Aldin Ardian, Oktarian W Lusantono, Barlian Dwinagara, Shofa Rijalul Haq	555
P-42	Mineralogical and Geochemistry Characteristic of Hydrothermally Altered Rock at Guci Geothermal Fields, Tegal, Central Java	Abdul Aziz Makarim, Dwi Fitri Yudiantoro, Iwan Setiawan, dan Andrie Al Kausar	562
P-43	LANDSLIDE SUCEPTIBILITY INDEX OF BRONDONG AREA AND SURROUNDINGS, KECAMATAN BRUNO, PURWOREJO DISTRICT, CENTRAL JAVA	Suko Prakoso, Arhananta, Aditya Rizky Wibowo, Anggita Mahyudani Rki, Prod. Dr. Ir. Sari Bahagiarti K. M.Sc, Dr. Ir. Heru Sigit Purwanto	569

An Evaluation of Excavatability Criteria for Sedimentary Rocks: A Correlation from Mechanical Properties

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ABSTRACT

Study of excavatability criterion has been derived from empirical methods based on the specific condition of materials. This study aimed to evaluate excavatability criterions based on standard methods such as Franklin et al., 1971; Pettifer and Fookes, 1994; and Equipment Handbook (Caterpillar and Komatsu). This study was undertaken through data collection on a similar geological condition on underdevelopment coal mining site. Sedimentary rocks formation, such as claystone, sandstone, and siltstone were the main rock-type investigated in this study. The parameters observed were Point Load Index (PLI), Fracture Index (FI), Unconfined Compressive Strength (UCS), and seismic velocity. The parameters were obtained from field testing and laboratory testing according to ASTM and ISRM standard. The investigated materials had a maximum value of PLI, UCS, and seismic velocity of 0.55 MPa, 15.75 MPa, and 2803 m/s, respectively. The evaluation of the prediction methods in this study undertaken by looking at the correlation of the selected parameters on the same set of samples. This study is continued on further study to provide more solid evaluation criterions.

INTRODUCTION

The prediction of rock excavations criteria usually stated as excavatability/rippability criterion. The correct prediction methods are subjects to the data sets and empirical approach on specified location around the world. The more understanding of rock behavior through its material properties for excavatability criterions will lead to the economic efficiency of the projects.

This study aimed to evaluate of excavatability criterions that commonly used in practices such as Franklin, Broch and Walton, 1971; Pettifer and Fookes, 1994; and equipment manufacture handbooks. This study is part of a series research of rippability criterions evaluations on the selected area of study. The research includes:

- Data collection and evaluation of rock properties.
- Database creations and analysis to determine the dominant factors which influence selected criterion.
- Productivity evaluation on the on-going project in the same location where the database has taken.
- Formulation and simulation of the proposed rippability criterion using numerical and mathematical modeling.

This research presented in this paper only focus on point (a) — the datasets obtained from a coal mining site concession in East Kalimantan Province, Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

The primary methodology of this research was the indirect methods of excavatability criteria. Data collection obtained through primary methods; geological drilling in the designated research area. The sample obtained from geological drilling was selected according to the material type, depth, and core length. Field studies and laboratory tests are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Field Studies and Laboratory Tests

Field Studies	Laboratory Tests
Rock Quality Designation	Uniaxial Compressive Strength
Discontinuity spacing	Point Load Index Seismic Velocity

Regression analysis was conducted as an evaluation from field studies and laboratory test to show the correlation between field and laboratory test. Prediction methods used in this research were graphical methods and seismic velocity.

PREDICTION CRITERION STATE-OF-THE-ART

The prediction criterions of excavatability of materials have been conducted by research from multiple researchers based on indirect methods (Basarir and Karpuz, 2004). There are three main indirect methods as follows:

Graphical Method

Graphical methods pioneered by Franklin et al., 1971 and updated by Pettifer and Fookes, 1994. The graphical method is not using the detailed field and laboratory experiments. The main parameter for graphical methods is Point Load Index (PLI - I_{p50}) and joint spacing (stated as Fracture Index - I_f). Point Load Index is a method to determine rock mass strength based on applied pressure on a certain point of the rock sample (Hoek and Bray 1981). Fracture Index is a function of Rock Quality Designation (RQD) with fracture frequency (λ) from the result of log drilling. The fracture Index equation (Hudson and Priest 1983) shown as follows:

$$RQD = 110.4 - 3.68\lambda \quad (1)$$

$$\lambda = \sum \frac{L}{l_f} \quad (2)$$

The example of graphical methods of Franklin et al.,

1977 and Pettifer and Fookes, 1994 are shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, respectively.

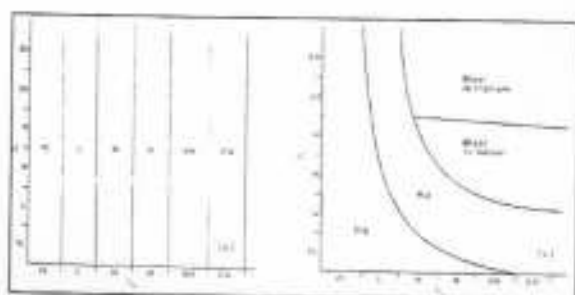


Fig. 1 Size-Strength Graphs (Franklin et al., 1971).

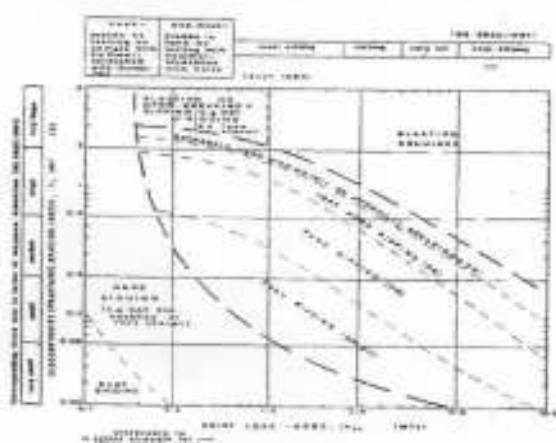


Fig. 2 Updated Size Strength Graph (Pettifer and Fookes, 1994)

Grading Methods

The former pioneer of grading method is Weaver, 1975 followed by a couple of researchers such as Scoble et al., 1984 and MacGregor et al., 1994. The principles of grading methods are similar with rock mass classification systems such as Rock Mass Rating (RMR) (Bienawski, 1989) and Q-system (Barton et al., 1974) except for the groundwater condition. Each parameter of rock mass are classified and graded in certain ways based on the researcher criterions. The excavatability class is determined from the cumulative grades. Rock strength and seismic velocity (P-wave velocity) are the dominant parameters used in the most grading methods. Rock strength is stated using UCS (Uniaxial Compressive Strength) to determine criteria for strength or weak rock. Seismic velocity is used to determine the fracture condition of the rock.

Seismic Velocity Based Methods

The seismic velocity of rock mass is related to geological and physical properties such as density, fracturing, and rock strength (Clark, 1996). Seismic velocity method pioneered by Atkinson (Atkinson, 1971). This method also commonly used by equipment manufacturers such as Caterpillar and Komatsu. The seismic criteria for Atkinson are shown in Fig. 3.

Excavatability criteria from mining equipment separated by type of materials and type of the equipment, shown in Fig. 4 and Fig. 5.

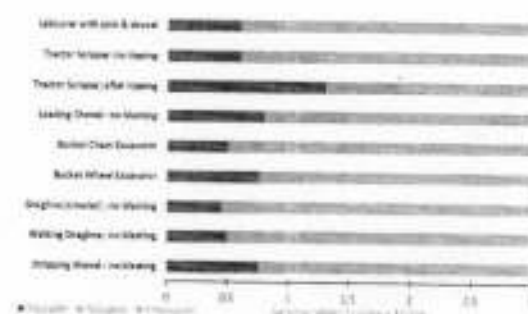


Fig. 3 Excavatability Criteria (Atkinson, 1971)

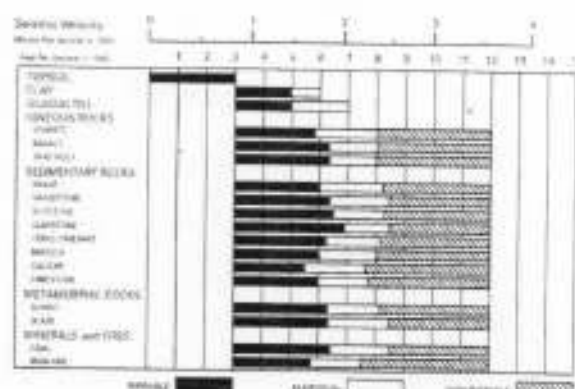


Fig. 4 Rippability Criteria for CAT D8R (Caterpillar, 2017)



Fig. 5 Rippability Criteria for Komatsu D155A (Komatsu, 2016)

GEOTECHNICAL DATABASE

The database for this study was taken in East Kalimantan Province, District of Kutai Kartanegara, Indonesia. The data was collected through a series of geological drilling in the coal mining concession in the same geological area. The location of the data collection is shown in Fig. 6.



Fig. 6 Geological Maps and Sampling Location

The datasets are classified as sedimentary rocks category that consist of claystone, sandstone, siltstone, carbonaceous claystone, and coal. The classification of the stratigraphy based on the physical properties obtained from geological drilling. There are 115 samples obtained with classification 35.65% claystone, 26.96% sandstone, 25.22% siltstone, 5.22% coal, 4.35% carbonaceous claystone, and 2.61% sandy sandstone (Fig. 7).

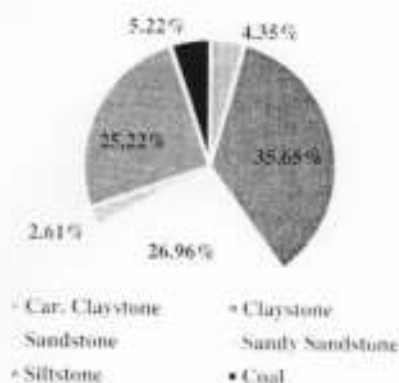


Fig. 7 Material Distribution in the Research Area

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data Distribution

The data distribution from the laboratory testing and field studies shown in the Fig. 8. The datasets have relatively low strength material based on the laboratory tests result (PLI, UCS, and seismic velocity). Based on the literature review, relatively low strength material is classified to easy-digging with typical excavator used in mining operation (i.e.

Komatsu PC-200) and easy-ripping with a typical mining equipment such as CAT Dozer D8R and Komatsu Dozer D115A.

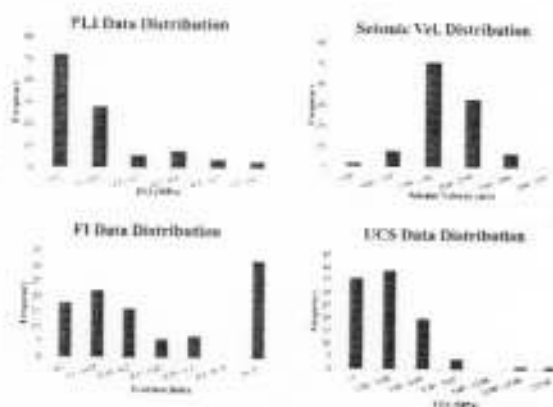


Fig. 8 Data Distribution from Field Studies and Laboratory Test Result

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis observed a relationship between field parameter and laboratory tests. The dependent variable is the Fracture index as a representative from field parameter. The result of regression model is displayed in Fig. 9. In general, fracture index has a low correlation to the laboratory tests (PLI, seismic velocity, and UCS) and dominated with negative correlation coefficient. The only positive correlation occurs on regression model of seismic velocity and in Sandstone material. This explained that the higher the seismic velocity will be followed by fracture index. The degree of correlation (R^2) for any regression model is indicates small strength of association between field parameter and laboratory tests. The highest R^2 occurred on regression model for PLI versus fracture index in Sandstone material. The result also indicates and confirms that Sandstone samples are denser and more compact than the other. Based on regression analysis, indirect prediction method of excavatability may have an unfortunate result from the direct methods although it should be investigated for further studies.

The multi-variate regression using linear model is conducted to investigate the relationship between field parameter with three variables from laboratory tests. The result of multi-variate regression shown in the Table 2.

Table 2. Multi-variate Regression Result

Parameter	Material		
	Claystone	Sandstone	Siltstone
UCS	-0.159	-0.508	-0.237
PLI	-0.135	-0.293	-0.075
Seismic Vel.	-0.024	0.241	-0.269

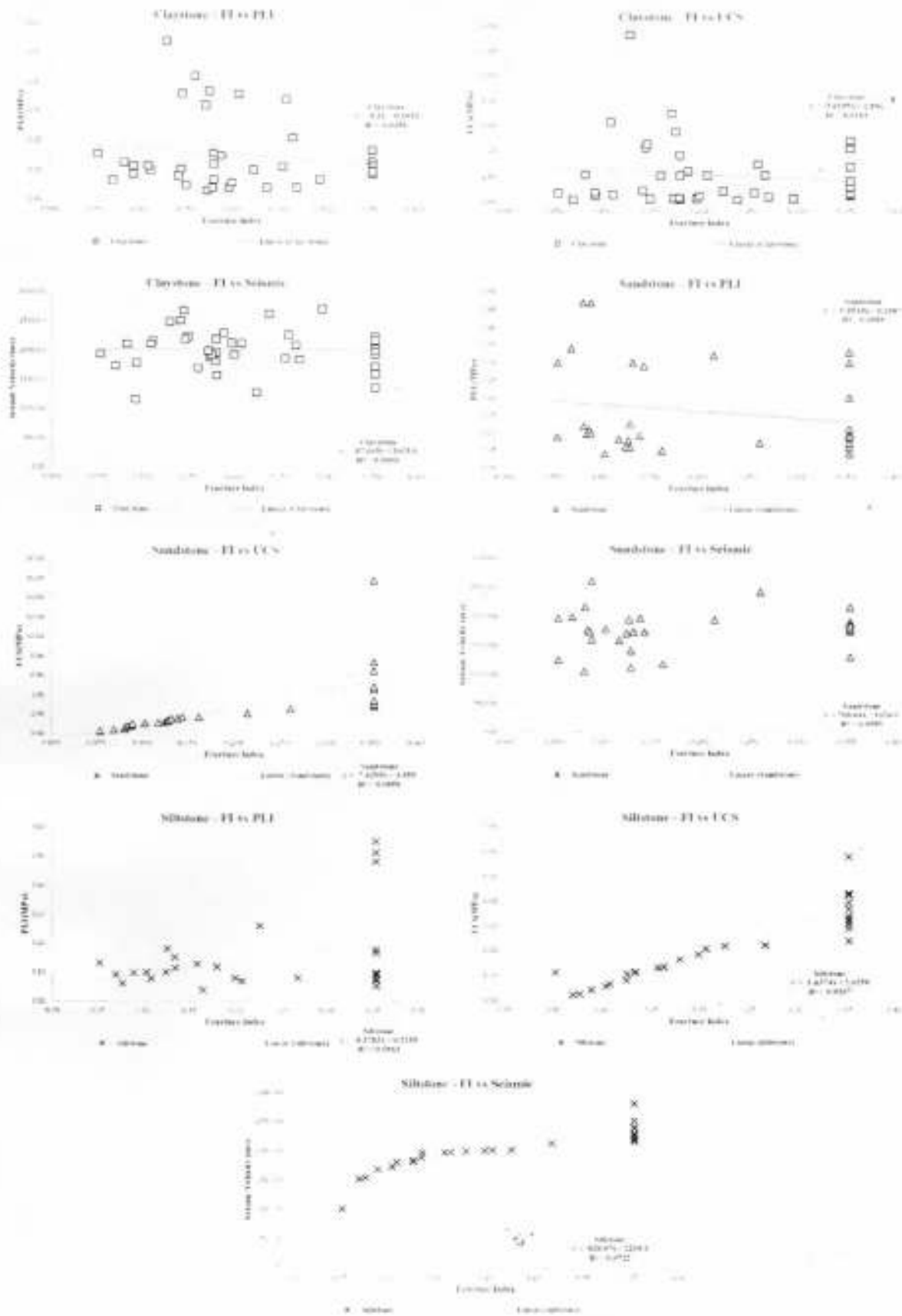


Fig. 9 Linear Regression Model for Correlation Analysis of Field Studies and Laboratory Test Result

Prediction Methods

The prediction methods used in this research refers to the result of correlation analysis and the availability of data. Graphical methods and seismic velocity based methods is used for excavatability criterion.

Graphical Methods

The graphical method used on this research refers to Pettifer and Fookes, 1994 since they stated the most updated chart for excavatability criterion. The result shown in Fig. 10.

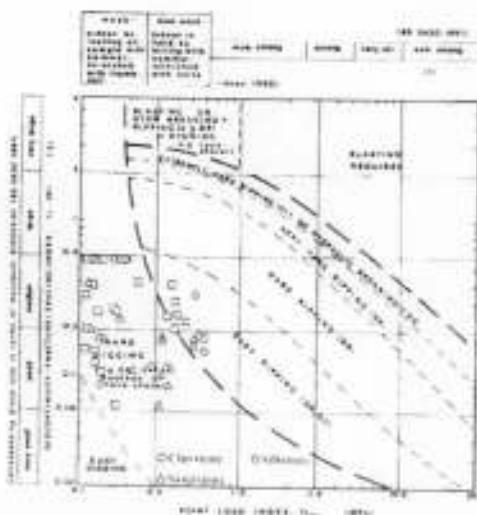


Fig. 10 Excavatability Prediction Result (chart based on Pettifer & Fookes, 1994).

Claystone materials (85.37%) are suitable for digging, meanwhile 14.63% are suitable for ripping. 93.55% of Sandstone materials are suitable for digging meanwhile 6.45% are suitable for ripping. 89.65% of Siltstone materials are suitable for digging meanwhile 10.35% are suitable for ripping. Based on the result above, the materials (claystone, sandstone, siltstone) are suitable for digging and ripping.

Seismic Velocity Based Methods

Seismic velocity based methods in this research refers to rippability criteria from the mining equipment manufacture. The predictions based on criteria from Dozer CAT D8R and Komatsu D155A (Fig. 11).

Seismic velocity criterion on Caterpillar D8R and Komatsu D155R displayed different result from Graphical Methods. Using seismic velocity criterions, there are a couple of materials datasets which may need blasting (non-rippable criteria) especially from Caterpillar D8R.

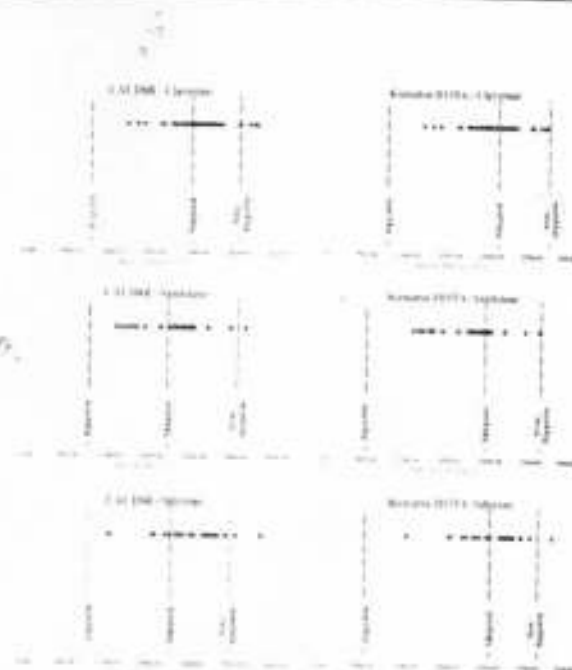


Fig. 11 Seismic Velocity Prediction Methods. (Caterpillar, 2017 and Komatsu, 2016)

The discrepancy between graphical methods and seismic velocity-based methods aligned with the correlation analysis result. The seismic velocity-based prediction methods only based on laboratory parameters and the graphical methods is merely combination of field and laboratory parameters. The correlation analysis stated that the relationship between field parameter and laboratory test parameters are relatively low ($R^2 < 0.25$). The difference needs to be investigated for the further study.

CONCLUSION

The excavability/rippability research study on this paper has a conclusion as follows:

- The correlation analysis shows a relatively low correlation between field parameters and laboratory tests result. Sandstone has the highest correlation coefficient from the other materials.
- There is a difference of excavatability criteria based on graphical and seismic velocity prediction methods that need to be investigated in the future.

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