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Working Capital Management Practices in Banks: A Review of Financial and Operational Perspectives

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Abstract

The significance of working capital management (WCM) to banks lies in its impact on financial resources management, which can affect the financial stability, financial efficiency, profitability, and liquidity of banks. This review addresses the financial and operational aspects of working capital management practices in the banks, namely its cash and liquidity management, loans and advances, deposits, credit recovery, capital adequacy and financial risk. The review draws on published research literature on banks in various countries and institutional contexts. The findings showed that the effective management of liquidity, lending capacity, cash deposits, and credit management can positively impact bank performance, especially profitability and ROA. But too much liquidity can restrict the ability to profitably deploy funds and too little can raise financial risk. Loan recovery and management of non-performing assets are also essential in achieving good financial performance. The review concludes that banks need a balanced WCM strategy, which is the adequate liquidity and productive fund usage, combined with proper credit management and financial controls.

Keywords; Working Capital Management; Bank Liquidity; Bank Profitability; Credit Management; Financial Stability.

INTRODUCTION

Working capital management (WCM) is the management of short term financial resources and obligations that is necessary to run the day-to-day business of an organization. It is related to decisions made about the amount and use of current assets and current liabilities and aims to achieve a balance between liquidity, risk and profitability. Study generally recognizes WCM as a relevant part of financial management, since mismanaging the short-term resources can cause liquidity problems and negatively impact financial results. Liquidity and profitability are also shown to be closely related outcomes of working-capital decisions from a review of the WCM research [1]. However, there is significant difference between the banking sector and non-financial firms concerning the nature of working capital. The short-term financial management of banks is closely linked to liquidity, deposits, loans, advances and cash resources and other financial obligations and is not the main responsibility of the bank in managing inventories and payables [2], [3]. Bank liquidity is the capacity to raise funds to cover the acquisition of assets and obligations that fall due. Therefore, good liquidity management is a critical element in sustaining confidence and continuous banking operations. Therefore, proper working-capital management of banks and other financial institutions allows them to pay out and fulfil their withdrawal obligations, service their loans and ensure the continuity of their operations without holding too many idle funds [4], [5].

The financial view of WCM is mainly the correlation between liquidity, profitability and financial risk, while the operational view is about efficient cash flow management, lending, deposits, recoveries and short-term obligations. An excess of liquidity will also limit the resources available to provide for income-

generating activities, and insufficient liquidity will place a bank at risk of financial and operational problems [6], [7].

The interdependency between bank liquidity and financial performance is evidenced, for Indian banks, by the fact that bank size, profitability, leverage, net interest margin, capital adequacy, and NPLs can all influence bank liquidity, as per the evidence collected from banking research in India [8]. The non-financial companies studies usually focus on receivables, inventories, payables and cash-conversion cycle, and it is established that the efficiency of these items can affect profitability [9]. In this context the current review of the working capital management in banks from financial and operational viewpoints is done, focusing on the liquidity management, profit, risk and cash-flow efficiency and operational continuity. The purpose of the review is to compile and make sense of previous studies to explain the impact of WCM for the financial stability and performance of the banking institutions.

WORKING CAPITAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN BANKS

The main concern of working capital management at Banks is to ensure adequate liquidity with efficient utilisation of working capital in investing in income generating assets. Banks get the funds primarily from deposits and borrowings, and use the funds primarily in loans, advances and investments, as compared to non-financial companies [10]. The Reserve Bank of India is emphasizing the importance of forecasting the incoming and outgoing liquidity and arranging the cash flow in such a way that the banks would be able to fulfill the demands of their customers and their cash outflows. Hence, bank working capital practices are the collated management of liquid assets, deposits, advances, short term funding and short term exposure to credit rather than the old fashioned inventory based working capital [11].

1. **Cash and Liquidity Management:** Banks have liquid assets on hand to cater for demands from their depositors, payment commitments and unforeseen funding needs. To be effective in managing liquidity, it is important to keep track of cash flows, the liquidity of the assets, and anticipate possible mismatches between assets and liabilities. The RBI guidelines highlight that having enough liquidity buffers, cash-flow forecasting and contingency funding arrangements are key elements of good liquidity management.
2. **Management of Assets, Liabilities and Credit:** Loans and advances are also significant uses of

bank funds and are generally paid at a higher rate of return, but are not always easily turned back into cash, and may be subject to credit risk for banks. These assets are supported by the resources provided by deposits, borrowings and other funding sources. Thus, banks need to maintain a balance between mobilization of deposits and deployment of loans and track loan recovery and credit quality to mitigate liquidity pressure and NPA.

3. **Working Capital Policies and Liquidity Level:** Find the right combination of liquidity, profitability and risk in an effective working-capital policy. Too much liquidity can result in too few loans, too little liquidity can hinder a bank's ability to make loans when they are needed. Hence, the liquidity framework of RBI highlights on internal liquidity limits, monitoring maturity gap, diversification of funding, and liquidity-risk tolerance.

Key Ratios in Working Capital Management

How successfully a company manages its working capital is demonstrated by the major indicators below.

1. Current Ratio:

Divide current assets by current liabilities to get the current ratio, often known as the working capital ratio:

$$\text{Current Ratio} = \frac{\text{Current Assets}}{\text{Current Liabilities}}$$

A ratio of up to 2:1 is regarded as healthy, though this can vary depending on the industry and whether the company is expanding; a ratio below 1.0 indicates liquidity problems, while an excessively high current ratio may indicate the company is using these assets inefficiently. If this ratio is 1.0 or higher, it usually indicates that the company can meet its short-term obligations.[12]

2. Quick Ratio (Acid-Test)

By removing inventory, the quick ratio improves upon the current ratio. For businesses whose inventory cannot be quickly liquidated for cash when needed, this ratio is very helpful. A company's short-term financial health is usually indicated by a quick ratio greater than 1.0 [13]. The formula is as follows:

$$\text{Quick Ratio} = \frac{(\text{Current Assets} - \text{Inventory})}{\text{Current Liabilities}}$$

3. Cash Conversion Cycle (CCC)

The time it takes for a company to turn its investments in inventory and other resources into cash flows from sales is measured by the CCC. A shorter CCC indicates greater efficiency and quicker cash recovery for future investments [14].

The components of the formula are as follows:

- Days inventory outstanding (DIO) measures how long it takes to sell inventory.
- Days sales outstanding (DSO) measures how long it takes to collect receivables.
- Days payable outstanding (DPO) measures how long it takes the company to pay its bills.

Here's the formula:

$$CCC = DIO + DSO - DPO$$

Ignoring the DPO results in the so-called operational cycle, which is the interval between purchasing goods and receiving payment for its sale.

$$Operating\ Cycle = DIO + DSO$$

4. Working Capital Turnover

The efficiency with which a company generates income from its working capital is gauged by the working capital turnover ratio. It is computed by dividing net sales by either net working capital or average working capital; the difference is frequently insignificant:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Working Capital Turnover} \\ &= \text{Net Sales} \\ &\div \text{Average Working Capital} \end{aligned}$$

While a lower ratio may indicate underutilisation of available resources, a higher ratio suggests that the company is effectively managing its assets and liabilities to generate sales [15].

FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF WORKING CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

When it comes to working capital management in banks, the financial angle is about achieving the right mix of liquidity, profitability and risk. Banks require adequate liquid resources for withdrawals or payments, but also do not want to have too much liquid resources as it will lead to a situation where they are investing in relatively low-yielding

assets, thereby limiting their earning potential. However, lack of liquidity can also lead to tighter funding pressure and for banks to be saddled with financial risk. The study of Indian banks also shows an inverse relationship between liquidity and profitability and suggests that regulatory capital can enhance the capacity of banks to shrug off liquidity risk [16].

1. **Liquidity–Profitability Trade-off:** For banks, it is a trade-off between keeping some liquid assets and investing in more liquid but less high-yielding assets. Increased liquidity brings about better safety and financial stability, while too much liquidity can lead to lower ROA, ROE, and NIM due to less capital invested in income-generating loans.
2. **Capital Adequacy and Financial Risk:** Sufficient capital buffers against unexpected losses, and contributes to liquidity management. Banking research in India suggests that higher capital adequacy is linked to higher ability to withstand liquidity risk and can help support profitability by lowering financial risk.
3. **NPAs, Credit Risk and Profitability:** The direct impact of non-performing assets on bank profitability is that these loans do not contribute to the bank's interest income, and they still carry the burden of funding and provisions. Empirical evidence indicates that there exists a negative correlation between NPAs and ROA and that deterioration of NPAs could also have a negative impact on NIM. Thus, the proper credit appraisal, monitoring and recovery are crucial in managing credit risk and the financial performance.

OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF WORKING CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

From an operational point of view, working capital management is concerned with the planning, monitoring and control of working capital to ensure continued banking activities. To manage cash flows effectively, banks need to forecast cash inflows and cash outflows, to determine future cash requirements, and to keep sufficient liquid assets at various time periods. To detect future liquidity excess or deficit, the Reserve Bank of India suggests monitoring cash-flow mismatch over time periods. Studies also indicate that cash forecasts at the branch level can be used to prevent cash shortages, surplus cash, and lower operating costs [17].

1. **Cash-Flow Planning and Management of Funds:** Banks must predict the amount of cash

needed and arrange outflows and inflows from deposits, withdrawals, loan disbursements, repayments and other transactions. Accurate forecasting allows for timely funding decisions and minimizes excess cash on hand. Evidence from India show that banks may face costs due to excess liquidity, suggesting that not only can their liquidity position be optimized but also that they need to do so.

2. **Loan, Deposit and Recovery Management:** It is important that loans are disbursed and recovered efficiently and that there is a roll on cash flow. Recovering lending assets in time can turn them into liquid resources, and the mobilization of deposits can produce a reliable supply of financial resources for lending and other purposes. Thus, banks must manage the growth of the deposits in conjunction with the deployment of credit and the repayment structure.
3. **Digital Technology and Internal Controls:** The use of digital banking and FinTech can enhance transaction processing, liquidity monitoring and operational efficiency. Indian banks have recently found that short-term liquidity and bank efficiency have a positive correlation with FinTech investment. In the same way, the adoption of digital payments has been linked to enhancing the cost efficiency of Indian banks. Technology systems must be complemented by internal monitoring, financial controls and risk-management systems to maximize accuracy in cash positions, timely detection of liquidity pressures and effective banking control.

Table 1: Operational Perspective of Working Capital Management in Banks

Operational area	Key practice	Expected benefit
Cash-flow planning	Forecast cash inflows and outflows	Avoids liquidity shortages
Loan management	Timely disbursement and recovery	Improves fund circulation
Deposit management	Mobilize and retain stable deposits	Strengthens funding availability
Idle funds	Optimize excess cash holdings	Improves earning potential
Digital technology	Use digital systems for monitoring transactions and liquidity	Improves operational efficiency

Internal controls	Regular monitoring and financial controls	Reduces operational and financial risk
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IMPACT OF WORKING CAPITAL MANAGEMENT ON BANK PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

Working capital management (WCM) is one of the most critical functions in banks that can balance profitability, liquidity, operational efficiency and financial stability in the organization. Because banks are intermediary institutions that turn in deposits and other resources into loans and investments, the efficient use of financial resources is crucial to making a profit and to ensuring a bank's liquidity. Studies have shown that bank liquidity and performance are linked to profitability, bank size, net interest margin, capital adequacy, deposits and non-performing loans.[18]

An efficient WCM will help banks to deploy funds in income-generating assets without having too much idle liquidity. But excess liquidity can reduce earning opportunities while insufficient liquidity can cause greater funding pressure and financial risks. As a result, banks have to ensure that they keep a balance between liquidity and profitability. Timely disbursement and recovery, deposit management and cash-flow planning are also enhanced by Effective WCM, which improves operational efficiency [19]. Liquidity is an important factor in ensuring the capacity to fulfill financial commitments and absorb adverse events. In addition, managing working capital well can add value for shareholders by boosting profitability and managing financial risk. Increasing NPAs may affect profits and financial health, making effective credit management even more critical.[20]

Key Factors Determining Effective WCM

1. **Bank size:** Size can influence liquidity capacity, funding access and financial stability.
2. **Liquidity:** Adequate liquidity enables banks to meet obligations while avoiding excessive idle funds.
3. **Capital adequacy:** Sufficient capital provides a buffer against unexpected losses and supports stability.
4. **Profitability:** Strong profitability provides greater capacity to manage liquidity and financial resources.

5. **Credit quality:** Effective credit assessment and recovery help control NPAs and protect bank earnings.
6. **Regulatory environment:** Capital, liquidity and prudential requirements shape banks' working-capital and risk-management decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Caka et al., (2025) [21] investigate how working capital management and credit management practices affect Kosovo's banks' financial performance. It is based on panel data taken from commercial banks' 2013–2022 financial statements. Fixed effect and random effect models are used to analyse the data, and the Hausman test result is used to determine which model better fits the data. While net loans to total assets, deposits to total assets, operating cash flows to total assets, capital adequacy ratio, and the ratio of a bank's ability to return deposits are independent variables used to gauge the working capital management and credit management practices of banks, ROA is the dependent variable as a performance indicator. In the meanwhile, control factors include the bank's size, leverage, and liquidity. With the exception of the variables net loan to total assets, bank size, and leverage, the analysis found a positive association between working capital management and banks' financial performance. Furthermore, banks' return on assets is positively correlated with credit management strategy, with the capital adequacy ratio, the ratio of a bank's capacity to refund deposits, and liquidity being statistically significant variables.

Attafuah, (2024) [22] Working capital management strategies' effects on the profitability of banks listed on the Ghana Stock Exchange between 2012 and 2022 were investigated in this study. The study's three main goals were to ascertain the link between bank profitability and the cash conversion cycle, the relationship between bank profitability and the acid ratio, and the relationship between bank profitability and the loan to deposit ratio. After adjusting for bank size, leverage, and debt, the study discovered a substantial negative correlation between the cash conversion cycle and return on capital employed. The study comes to the conclusion that working capital management has a major impact on banks' profitability. In other words, commercial banks are better equipped to fulfill their short-term obligations on time when working capital is well managed. This makes it possible for commercial banks to run smoothly and effectively. Finance managers of commercial banks listed on the Ghana Stock Exchange are advised to constantly monitor their banks' cash condition.

Wanzala & Obokoh, (2024) [16] Because it influences a company's profitability, liquidity, and investment choices—all of which have an impact on financial performance—working capital management is essential. Effective and efficient working capital management is therefore crucial for businesses in the commercial and service sectors. The purpose of this study was to examine how working capital management affected the financial performance of these companies, especially those listed on "the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE), from 2003 to 2022", given the significance of the commercial and services sectors to the Kenyan economy. While return on asset, return on equity, and net operating profit margin were used to assess financial performance, average age of inventory, average collection duration, average payment period, and cash conversion cycle were used to measure working capital management. The average inventory age, average collection duration, average payment period, and average cash conversion cycle were all found to be adversely correlated with financial performance for NSE-listed commercial and service enterprises using panel regression analysis. In order to enhance company financial performance and optimise shareholder value, Kenyan commercial and service enterprises are advised to implement conservative optimum working capital management techniques.

Zehra, (2025) [23] Using information taken from HDFC Bank's public annual reports, this research looks at the bank's working capital management during a ten-year period (2015–2025). Liquidity indicators such "the Cash-Deposit Ratio (CDR), Credit-Deposit Ratio (CD Ratio), Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR), Net Working Capital (NWC), Current Ratio, and Quick Ratio" are all included in the study. The results show that HDFC Bank continuously balanced stability and profitability by maintaining strong liquidity buffers and guaranteeing effective credit deployment. The findings also show how exogenous shocks, such the COVID-19 epidemic, momentarily changed liquidity tactics, resulting in increased reserves and slower loan growth. Overall, HDFC Bank showed financial discipline and resilience, adhering to Reserve Bank of India regulations and Basel III liquidity criteria. Policymakers, regulators, and financial management can use the study's practical implications to create liquidity policies that support stability and protect banking industry profitability.

Gladys, (2024) [24] determine how working capital management affected Centennial Bank's financial performance. Cash and cash equivalents, total customer loans and advances, total customer deposits, and total short-

term borrowing were the primary components of working capital that were examined. The number of days that inventory was kept in stock plus the number of days that sales were outstanding less the number of days that payables were outstanding was used to determine the cash conversion cycle. Indicators of profitability included net interest margin, return on equity, and return on assets. The trends in working capital measures and profitability ratios from 2013 to 2018 were examined using descriptive statistical analysis. The results showed that the suggested null hypothesis was rejected and the positive hypothesis that there was a substantial association between working capital management and financial performance was accepted ($F=61.453$, $p<0.00$). To guarantee that the institutions can fund their activities without financial constraints, the management should adopt appropriate cash inventory and creditors' management.

Fabiani, (2026) [25] evaluated how Tanzanian commercial banks' financial performance was impacted by working capital management. Three identified predictive factors were investigated in relation to financial performance using return on asset (ROA) in the research. Lending capacity, liquidity, and cash deposits are among the predictive characteristics. Causal association testing, an explanatory design, was used to conduct the study. The results showed that all three predictive variables—lending capacity, liquidity, and cash deposits—have a statistically significant positive impact on the dependent variable, which is the financial performance of commercial banks, with $p<0.05$. The findings suggest that lending capacity, liquidity, and cash deposits have a favourable impact on Tanzanian commercial banks' financial performance as measured by return on assets (ROA) through working capital management. This is crucial to the advancement of knowledge, particularly on the significance of the connection between working capital management and commercial banks' financial performance.

DISCUSSION

Based on the literature, Management of working capital has been shown to be one of the factors that determines the profitability, liquidity and continuity of the operations of the bank. Effectively managing liquidity, deposits, loans, cash resources and credit exposure is generally linked to good financial performance in various banking contexts. The positive influence of lending capacity, liquidity, deposits, and some working capital indicators on bank performance, especially ROA, was reported by Caka et al. (2025) and Fabiani (2026). Attafuah (2024) also observed that good

working-capital management will help banks discharge their short-term obligations and run their operations without any interruption. The evidence also emphasizes the need for an appropriate liquidity-to-profits ratio as a short-run balance, pointing out that too much liquidity can limit the deployment of funds at a profit. Zehra (2025) showed that keeping liquidity buffers high and delivering adequate credit deployments can help to build banking resilience. In general, the studies reviewed indicate that bank WCM is a multidimensional phenomenon that needs coordinated management of funds, credit quality, liquidity and capital adequacy. Variations in the banking sector, the regulatory framework, and measurement methods, however, suggest that the best practices for executing a WCM may differ between institutions and countries.

CONCLUSION

The working capital management is an integral part of financial management in a banking firm because it affects the liquidity, profitability, efficiency of operation, and financial stability of the banking firm. The working capital of banks is managed mainly by cash, deposits, loans and advances and other financial obligations, whereas, in non-financial firms, it is managed mainly by inventory and trade payables. The available evidence suggests that well-managed liquidity, optimal use of lending resources, mobilization of deposits and prompt collection of loans can assist in enhancing bank performance. Meanwhile, over-liquidity can limit earning potential while under-liquidity can create financial and operational risk. The effectiveness of WCM is also determined by capital adequacy and credit quality including the management of NPAs. From the overall perspective, banks need to take a balanced view, with enough liquidity and sufficient funds utilisation. This can help to improve profitability, continuity, financial stability and long-term value to shareholder.

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