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The Role of Financial Intelligence Strategies in Enhancing Banking Competitiveness: A Case Study of Gulf Commercial Bank

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Abstract: This research aims to demonstrate the role of financial intelligence strategies in enhancing banking competitiveness by examining the relationship between Gulf Commercial Bank's adoption of these strategies and its competitive performance. The study is based on the fundamental hypothesis that the effective use of financial intelligence strategies improves resource allocation efficiency and supports financial decision-making, thereby positively impacting banking competitiveness indicators. The study employs a descriptive-analytical approach, relying on a set of financial and banking indicators to analyze both financial intelligence and banking competitiveness. The study was applied to Gulf Commercial Bank for the period (2016-2023) to track the development of the relationship between the research variables. It is concluded that achieving financial intelligence in a bank depends not only on increasing the size of assets, but more importantly on the efficiency of their management and deployment in banking activities that generate higher returns and profitability. The study also reveals that the high growth in interest and commission income at the Gulf Commercial Bank, the sample of this research, does not necessarily lead to improved profit margins. Many years have seen increased revenue growth alongside declining profitability, reflecting flaws in cost management or inefficient resource allocation.

Furthermore, while the Gulf Commercial Bank has demonstrated improved operational efficiency (asset turnover), this has not been consistently reflected in profitability, indicating a gap between operational and profitability performance. Therefore, it is essential to implement intelligent mechanisms for managing financial intelligence indicators to enhance competitiveness in the banking market, particularly given the rapid changes in the financial environment. Restructuring the financial obligations of the Gulf Commercial Bank, the sample of this study, and streamlining funding sources to reduce costs and improve risk management will contribute to increased performance efficiency and greater financial stability. Enhancing the culture of financial intelligence within Gulf Commercial Bank through continuous banking awareness, developing the analytical capabilities of banking staff, and linking senior management decisions to smart financial indicators.

Keywords: Financial intelligence, competitiveness, Gulf Commercial Bank, asset turnover, profit margin.

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1. Introduction

The Iraqi banking sector is currently experiencing rapid changes due to successive technological and financial developments, as well as intense competition among banks at both the local and international levels. This has compelled commercial banks to adopt modern strategies capable of improving their performance and ensuring their continued viability in the banking market. In this context, the concept of financial intelligence has

emerged as a strategic tool that contributes to enhancing the quality of financial decisions and improving the efficiency of resource management.

Financial intelligence strategies are manifested in a set of practices aimed at in-depth analysis of financial data, risk forecasting, and capitalizing on available opportunities to achieve optimal utilization of available resources. These strategies also help strengthen commercial banks' ability to adapt to changes in the banking environment and achieve higher levels of operational efficiency and profitability, which directly impacts their competitiveness.

Therefore, studying the role of financial intelligence strategies is of paramount importance as commercial banks strive to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage by developing financial performance indicators and upgrading banking services offered to customers. This strengthens their market position and ensures their ability to meet future challenges.

2. Materials and Methods

Research Problem

Private commercial banks listed on the Iraq Stock Exchange, which are relatively new to financial technology and digitalization, face increasing challenges in a rapidly changing and highly competitive banking environment. Therefore, the management of these banks aims to improve their financial performance by providing the best digital banking services, maximizing shareholder wealth, and enhancing their competitiveness in financial markets. Financial intelligence strategies have emerged as an effective tool to help commercial banks make sound financial decisions, analyze banking risks, and invest resources efficiently.

Despite the significant contributions of financial intelligence strategies to enhancing banking competitiveness, the number of applied studies that have systematically addressed this link remains insufficient. Therefore, there is a need to find unconventional ways to exploit opportunities, utilize available resources, and invest them at the lowest possible cost. The research problem lies in the following main question: (Can financial intelligence strategies contribute to enhancing banking competitiveness?) From this main question, the following sub-questions arise:

1. Do financial intelligence strategies play a role in improving banking competitiveness?
2. Do financial intelligence strategies contribute to maximizing the market share of Iraqi private commercial banks?
3. To what extent do private commercial banks rely on financial intelligence strategies in their banking operations?

Importance of the Research

This research is significant because it seeks to understand the purpose behind using financial intelligence strategies to achieve a competitive advantage for private commercial banks. This is achieved through the contribution of financial intelligence strategies to the successful management and development of banking activities and investment projects, as well as their role in establishing profitable projects and generating real profits. Successful banks possess a competitive advantage in providing high-quality banking services and outstanding performance, in addition to utilizing financial digitization and digital transformation systems.

Research Objectives

This research aims to highlight the following:

1. To define the concept of financial intelligence strategies and their role in enhancing the competitive advantage of private commercial banks listed on the Iraq Stock Exchange.
2. To understand and analyze customer financial behaviour through the use of financial intelligence strategies. Financial intelligence strategies are considered modern approaches in the field of financial management in general and banking institution management in particular.

- To understand the impact of financial intelligence on the financial decisions of investors in commercial banks and how to achieve investors' goals in terms of profitability and risk, all to achieve what is known as financial success.

Research Hypotheses

In response to the research questions and after reviewing relevant sources and references, the main hypothesis of this study can be formulated as follows: (The effective use of financial intelligence strategies contributes to improving the efficiency of resource allocation and supporting financial decision-making, which positively impacts banking competitiveness indicators). Several sub-hypotheses stem from this main hypothesis, as follows:

- The Gulf Commercial Bank, the subject of this study, seeks to utilize financial intelligence strategies by relying on financial intelligence metrics.
- The application of financial intelligence strategies contributes to improving the efficiency of financial resource utilization within the bank, thus enhancing its banking competitiveness.
- Financial intelligence strategies lead to improved profitability and liquidity indicators, which support the competitiveness of commercial banks.
- Financial intelligence strategies help improve asset and liability management, which positively impacts competitive performance.

Research approach

To give the research study its due in terms of analysis, interpretation, and highlighting its components, this study relies on the descriptive method to clarify the theoretical aspects of the study by drawing on various references, including books and scholarly articles. The analytical method is employed through the use of the financial data of the Gulf Commercial Bank, listed on the Iraq Stock Exchange, and an attempt to review and analyze its financial data in a manner appropriate to the study's subject matter, relying on statistical publications and the bank's own documents.

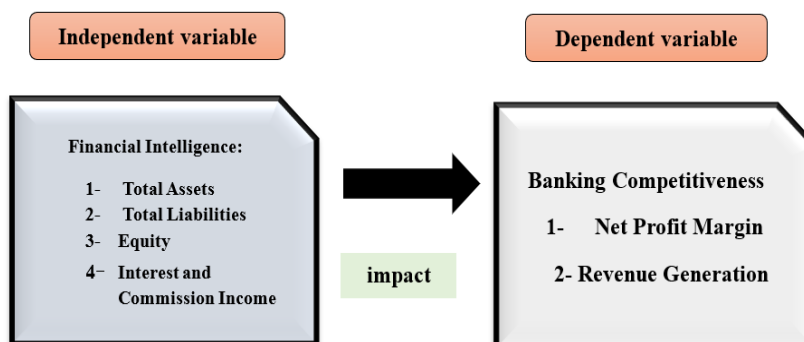
Research Scope

The research study can be divided into two scopes: a geographical scope, which is the Gulf Commercial Bank listed on the Iraq Stock Exchange, and a temporal scope, which is the period from 2016 to 2023, due to the availability of financial data during this period.

Research Hypothesis

The study's hypothetical scheme was designed as shown in Figure 1, which illustrates the relationship between the study variables. This design is based on the theoretical framework of financial intelligence strategies and the theoretical framework of banking competitiveness, and takes into account the study's problem, objectives, and hypotheses. The hypothetical scheme, which illustrates the logical relationship between the study variables, is formulated as follows:

- Independent Variable: Represented by the financial intelligence strategies indicators, namely, total assets, total liabilities, equity, and interest and commission income.
- Dependent Variable: Represented by banking competitiveness, namely, (net profit margin and revenue capacity).



Section Two: Theoretical Aspect

The Concept of Financial Intelligence

Financial intelligence is based on an innovative thinking approach that helps in understanding the prevailing situation of the banking business environment through continuous monitoring and attempting to predict trends. This allows for identifying opportunities to be invested in, thereby achieving excellence and continuous innovation, or risks to be avoided in the pursuit of improving the financial performance of banks and the ability to deal efficiently and effectively with the target environment. It also involves making continuous, radical improvements by relying on advanced communication devices to provide services that exceed the expectations of competitors and consumers, thus achieving leadership. Financial intelligence can be defined as the emotional mobilization to obtain innovative solutions based on the financial performance of the institution. This mobilization requires the use of financial figures and tools to reach sound investment decisions. [1]

It can also be defined as the successful performance of banking operations through a clear and thorough understanding of financial success metrics and their impact on performance. [2]

Financial intelligence is also defined as a way of thinking rather than a set of sequential procedures for analyzing bank performance. [3]

Therefore, it can be said that financial intelligence relies on the ability to understand, analyze, and interpret financial information to achieve the best financial and investment position. It views financial data differently from the traditional perspective, going beyond simply seeing it as a collection of numbers in financial reports. Instead, it encompasses a three-dimensional financial framework and incorporates a set of criteria that enable informed financial decision-making and the making of optimal investment decisions. [4]

Financial Intelligence Strategies

Financial intelligence strategies can be achieved through the following [5]

1. **Understanding the Fundamentals of Finance:** This means knowing the basic financial standards through a deep and detailed reading of financial statements (balance sheet, income statement, cash flow statement).
2. **Working with Financial Statements:** This means knowing how to work with accounting and financial figures with high accuracy to draw conclusions that align with the current and future performance of banks or companies and present them effectively to stakeholders.
3. **Analytical Ability:** This refers to the ability to deeply analyze financial and accounting figures and information and link them into a function that helps in making accurate financial decisions.
4. **Gaining a Broader Understanding of the Organization or Company:** The figures published in financial statements alone are insufficient for a complete understanding of the organization's or company's financial situation. Financial results require consideration of other factors to fully grasp their significance. These factors include economic factors, the competitive environment, regulatory or technological considerations, and changes in customer needs.
5. **Possessing Financial Intelligence Skills:** Financial intelligence skills are fundamental to financial engineering. Financial engineering is a design tool that relies on financial innovations, which in turn depend on financial skills and expertise, as well as the ability to employ mathematical and statistical models to analyze complex financial issues and arrive at the desired financial innovations. [6]
6. **Good presentation of financial statements:** Good presentation of financial statements helps encourage investors to provide capital, as we find that accounting operations in any company begin with the real-time collection of data, the daily recording of sales, purchases and transactions and their re-presentation in the form of main financial statements, whether it is the income statement, profit and loss account, balance sheet and cash flow statement, as well as the operating

budget. These statements help in comparing with past financial performance and identifying future financial risks, and thus help in creating opportunities to improve financial performance by gaining the confidence of investors relatively [7].

The Concept of Banking Competitiveness

Banking competitiveness is defined as the bank's ability to find something unique and different that distinguishes all its products and services from those offered to competitors in the eyes of customers, by performing its activities more efficiently and effectively.[8]. From an organizational perspective, competitiveness is also defined as the organization's ability to achieve benefits by producing high-quality goods and services that attract consumers more than its competitors and are more effective than they are, at an acceptable price and promptly, while achieving greater profitability.[9]. Banking competitiveness also refers to the way and ability banks can differentiate themselves from their competitors and achieve superiority and distinction over them. Achieving a competitive advantage is the result of several real factors that combine to reduce costs and improve quality. Therefore, banks must choose a strategy based on strengths and weaknesses, focusing on important factors such as geographic location, customer type, and service quality. [10]

From the preceding definitions, we can conclude that banking competitiveness reflects the extent to which banks can perform in a distinctive manner that is difficult for competitors to replicate. It is the position that allows a bank to deal with various banking markets and their surrounding environment, with all its elements, better than its competitors.

The Importance of Competitiveness in Commercial Banks

Competitiveness plays a crucial role in enhancing the ability of commercial banks to meet challenges and increase their market share by increasing their flexibility. This flexibility allows them to adapt to various changes, whether environmental or technological, enabling them to survive and continue operating. Furthermore, it contributes to improving employee performance and maximizing bank profits.

Competitiveness is a fundamental strength in confronting the challenges of banking markets. This is achieved through banks developing their competitive knowledge and their ability to meet customer needs by investing in technology and developing productive skills, thus enabling them to adapt to rapidly changing opportunities [11]. Competitiveness is a key criterion for successful banks because it helps them continuously develop new competition models [12].

Banking competitiveness is a key indicator of a bank's ability to survive and grow in the banking market. This is achieved by gaining a larger market share than its competitors through improved service quality and increased customer satisfaction, thus giving it a competitive edge [13]. Furthermore, it represents a fundamental pillar for growth and development in the changing global economic environment, where banks now require distinct competitive capabilities to ensure their continuity and success. Competitive excellence can only be achieved through the adoption of well-considered strategies that drive banks toward excellence, innovation, and improved performance. [14]

Types of Banking Competitive Capabilities [15]

There are several competitive capabilities available to a bank that strives to differentiate itself from its competitors, creating a competitive advantage. These include [16][17]:

1. **Information Capabilities:** These consist of effective information and communication systems, and the available knowledge base regarding market variables and business system elements.
2. **Production Capabilities:** These are the production capabilities, systems, and research and development capabilities that can produce distinguished banking services.
3. **Financial Capabilities:** This refers to providing appropriate financial resources, which is considered a competitive advantage.

4. **Organizational Capabilities:** This refers to a flexible organizational structure that is open to the environment and facilitates communication and the smooth flow of information.
5. **Human Capabilities:** This refers to the availability of motivated, trained, and qualified human resources that possess creative intellectual capabilities and a desire to involve all stakeholders.
6. **Marketing Capabilities:** These are the capabilities and methods of communicating with the market and striving to reach customers to deliver services to them according to their requirements and expectations

3. Results and Discussion

Section Three: The Practical Framework

Analysis of Financial Intelligence Strategies and Their Role in Enhancing Banking Competitiveness

The concept of financial intelligence is a fundamental contemporary concept in financial and banking sciences. It plays a crucial role in making financial investment decisions that enhance and strengthen banks' competitive position, making them more successful. Financial intelligence involves examining and analyzing financial data, including the following indicators (total assets, total liabilities, total equity, and total interest and commission income), extracted from the balance sheet and income statement of the private commercial banks in the research sample.

The aim is to accurately analyze and interpret the results. It also involves analyzing banking competitiveness, including the following indicators (revenue capacity, represented by asset turnover and profit margin ratio). This will produce a relatively comprehensive analysis of how these tools perform on a financial basis. 1. Analysis of Financial Intelligence Strategy Indicators at Gulf Commercial Bank (Research Sample) for the Period (2016-2023)

The bank leverages financial intelligence skills to add strategic value and protect its assets. A financial intelligence strategy is fundamental in helping the bank become more agile and profitable, thus giving it an advantage in facing increasing competitive pressures in the banking sector. The following is an analysis of the financial intelligence strategy indicators for Gulf Commercial Bank:

Total Assets Indicator

Total assets are one of the indicators that reflect financial intelligence in the balance sheet. They represent the bank's financial resources, which can be illustrated in the following table:

Table 1. Total Assets Indicator and Growth Rate for Gulf Commercial Bank (Research Sample) (Million Dinars)

Year / Bank	Total assets	Total asset growth rate (%)
2016	802,022	---
2017	603,313	-24.78%
2018	578,337	-4.14%
2019	549,146	-5.05%
2020	510,798	-6.98%
2021	538,491	5.42%
2022	553,057	2.70%
2023	572,650	3.54%
Compound Growth Rate	-4.12%	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the [16].

From the data in this table, we observe that the growth trajectory of Gulf Commercial Bank's total assets was high in 2016, amounting to (802,022) million dinars, before decreasing in 2020 by (510,798) million dinars. This can be attributed to the repercussions

of the COVID-19 pandemic, the continuation of difficult security and economic conditions that affected the global economy in general and the banks under study in particular, as well as an increase in the bank's debts, which led to the conversion of these assets into cash to be used in confronting these crises. This forced the bank's asset owners to obtain funds to settle their obligations or debts due on a specific date, which resulted in a decrease in financial assets in 2020. [16]. However, this decline was not sustained, and the bank's assets rebounded in 2023, increasing by 572,650 million dinars. This increase was a result of the recovery of economic activity. It is also worth noting that the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of total assets for Gulf Commercial Bank was -4.12%.

The growth rates of total assets for Gulf Commercial Bank exhibited a volatile trend. While they were negative at -24.78% in 2017, they rose to 5.42% in 2021, before declining and stabilizing at 3.54% in 2023. The following figure illustrates the developments in the value of total assets and their growth rates for the Gulf Commercial Banks included in the research sample during the study period.

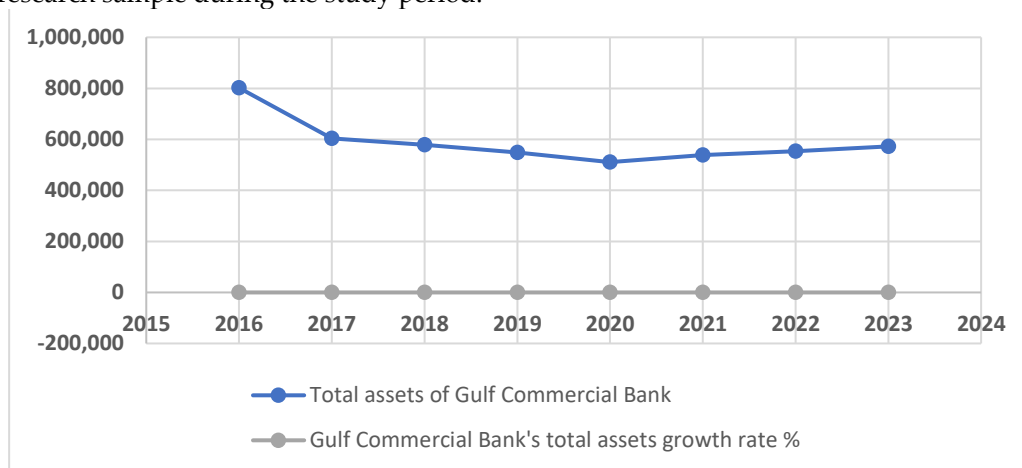


Figure 1. Development of Total Assets and Their Growth Rate for Gulf Commercial Banks in the Research Sample for the Period (2016-2023)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table No. (1)

Total Liabilities Index

Total liabilities (obligations) and financial intelligence are closely linked, as financial intelligence reflects the ability of an individual, company, or bank to manage liabilities effectively and sustainably. It is the sum of debts and obligations owed by an individual, company, or bank to external parties. The following table shows the value of total liabilities and their growth rate for the Gulf Commercial Banks in the research sample.

Table 2. Total Liabilities Index and Growth Rate for Gulf Commercial Banks Sample (million dinars)

Year / Bank	Total Liabilities	Total Liabilities Growth Rate%
2016	484,288	-----
2017	282,427	-41.68%
2018	263,864	-6.57%
2019	242,436	-8.12%
2020	203,626	-16.01%
2021	234,165	15.00%
2022	244,416	4.38%
2023	251,192	2.77%
Compound Growth Rate	-7.88%	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the [16].

From the data in this table, we observe that the development of total liabilities for Gulf Commercial Bank was high in 2016, amounting to (484,288) million dinars, then decreased in 2020 by an amount of (203,626) million dinars. The reason for these decreases is attributed to the developments that occurred in the decline in the value of current accounts and deposits as a result of the continued security situation and the difficult and critical economic conditions that our country, and in particular the banking sector, faced. Despite this, thanks to its strong reputation, the bank was able to maintain customer confidence and preserve deposits by adopting a conservative financial management approach through which liquidity related to term deposits was balanced, as there are no restrictions on customer withdrawals at any time and no minimum limit for any financial transaction. The term deposit ratio reached (50%), which is a very good percentage among all banks operating in Iraq. [16]. However, this decline was not sustained, and the bank resumed its upward trend, stabilizing in 2023 at an amount of (251,192) million dinars. It is also noted that the compound annual growth rate of Gulf Commercial Bank's total liabilities was (-7.88%).

The growth rates of total liabilities for Gulf Commercial Bank showed a fluctuating trend, as they were negative at (-41.68%) in 2017, they then rose to (15.00%) in 2021, but they declined until they stabilized at (2.77%) in 2023. The following figure illustrates the developments that occurred in the value of total liabilities and their growth rate for the Gulf Commercial Banks sample of the research for the period studied.

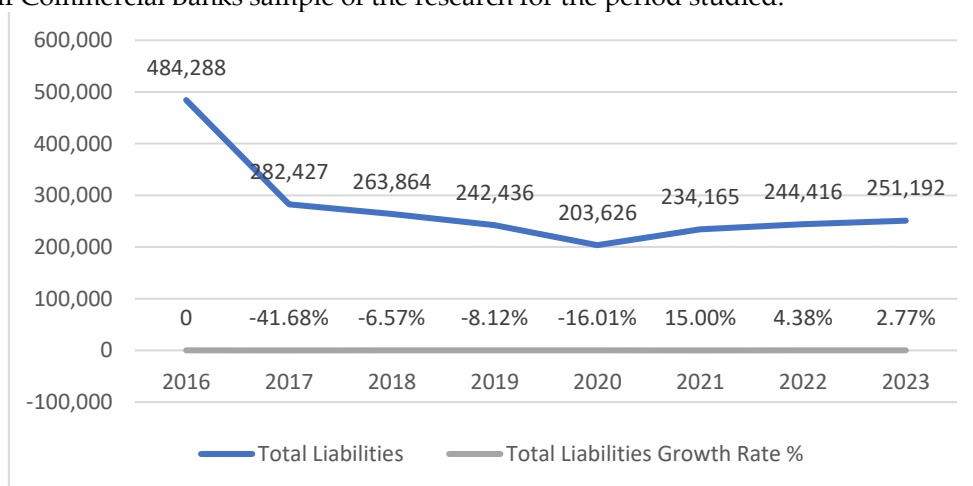


Figure 2. Development of Total Liabilities and Their Growth Rate for Gulf Commercial Banks in the Research Sample for the Period (2016-2023)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table No. (2)

Equity Index

This is one of the most common financial metrics used by analysts to assess the financial position of any bank. Equity serves as a tool to enhance financial intelligence, and the higher the level of financial intelligence in commercial banks, the greater their ability to protect and maximize shareholder rights through well-considered financial and investment decisions. The following table shows the value of shareholders' equity and its growth rate for the Gulf Commercial Banks in the research sample.

Table 3. Shareholders' Equity Index and Growth Rate for Commercial Banks in the Research Sample (million dinars)

Year / Bank	Equity %	Equity Growth Rate %
2016	317,734	-----
2017	320,887	0.99%
2018	314,473	-2.00%
2019	306,709	-2.47%
2020	307,172	0.15%
2021	304,325	-0.93%

Year / Bank	Equity %	Equity Growth Rate %
2022	308,641	1.42%
2023	321,457	4.15%
Compound Growth Rate	0.15%	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the [16].

From the data in this table, we observe that the development of shareholders' equity for Gulf Commercial Bank was low in 2016, amounting to (317,734) million dinars. It then increased in 2017 to (320,887) million dinars. This increase is attributed to the fact that the rise in shareholders' equity compared to the previous year, by approximately (10%), stemmed primarily from profits realized during the current year. [16] However, this upward trend was not sustained, exhibiting fluctuating behaviour with increases and decreases throughout the research period until it stabilized at (321,457) million dinars in 2023. This stabilization resulted from the recovery of economic activity, leading to a surplus and an increase in the fair value reserve for financial assets. [16]. It is also noted that the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of shareholders' equity for Gulf Commercial Bank was 0.15%.

The growth rates of shareholders' equity for Gulf Commercial Bank exhibited a volatile trend. While positive at 0.99% in 2017, they subsequently declined to -2.47% in 2019, before rising again and stabilizing at 4.15% in 2023. The following figure illustrates the developments in the total value of shareholders' equity and its growth rate for the Gulf Commercial Banks included in the research sample over the study period.

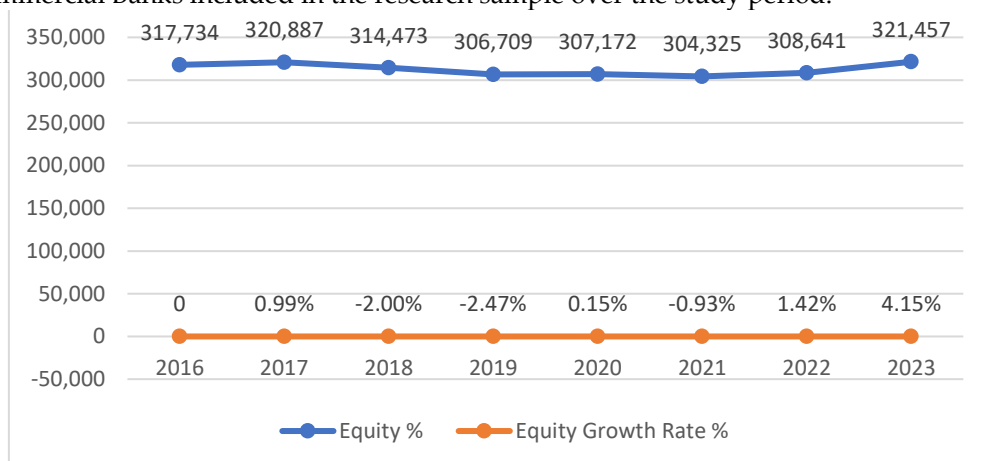


Figure 3. Development of Total Equity and its Growth Rate for Gulf Commercial Banks in the Research Sample for the Period (2016-2023)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table No. (3)

Interest and Commission Income Index

This is one of the financial indicators used in analyzing the performance of commercial banks. It reflects the revenues generated by the bank from interest collected on loans and credit facilities, in addition to commissions and fees on banking services. The following table shows the value of interest and commission income and its growth rate for the Gulf Commercial Banks in the research sample.

Table 4. Interest and Commission Income Index and Growth Rate for the Gulf Commercial Banks in the Research Sample (million dinars)

Year / Bank	Interest and commission income	Interest and commission income growth rate %
2016	19,458	-----
2017	12,921	%33.60-
2018	11,699	%9.46-

Year / Bank	Interest and commission income	Interest and commission income growth rate %
2019	9,043	%22.70-
2020	11,685	%29.22
2021	6,488	%44.48-
2022	8,623	%32.91
2023	20,146	%133.63
Compound Growth Rate	0.44%	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on [16].

From the data in this table, we observe that the trend in total interest and commission income for Gulf Commercial Bank was high in 2016, amounting to 19,458 million dinars. It then decreased in 2017 to (9,043) million dinars. This decrease is attributed to developments in the decline of interest on overdraft accounts and a decrease in interest on loans and bills of exchange due to the ongoing security situation and the difficult and critical economic conditions facing our country, particularly the banking sector [16]. However, this decline did not continue and subsequently fluctuated between increases and decreases until it stabilized in 2023 at 20,146 million dinars. It is also noted that the compound annual growth rate of total interest and commission income for Gulf Commercial Bank was (0.44%). The growth rates of total interest and commission income for Gulf Commercial Bank showed a volatile trend. While it was negative (-33.60%) in 2017, it then rose to (-9.46%) in 2018, fluctuating between increases and decreases until it stabilized at (133.63%) in 2023. The following figure illustrates the developments in the value of interest and commission income and its growth rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, during the studied period.

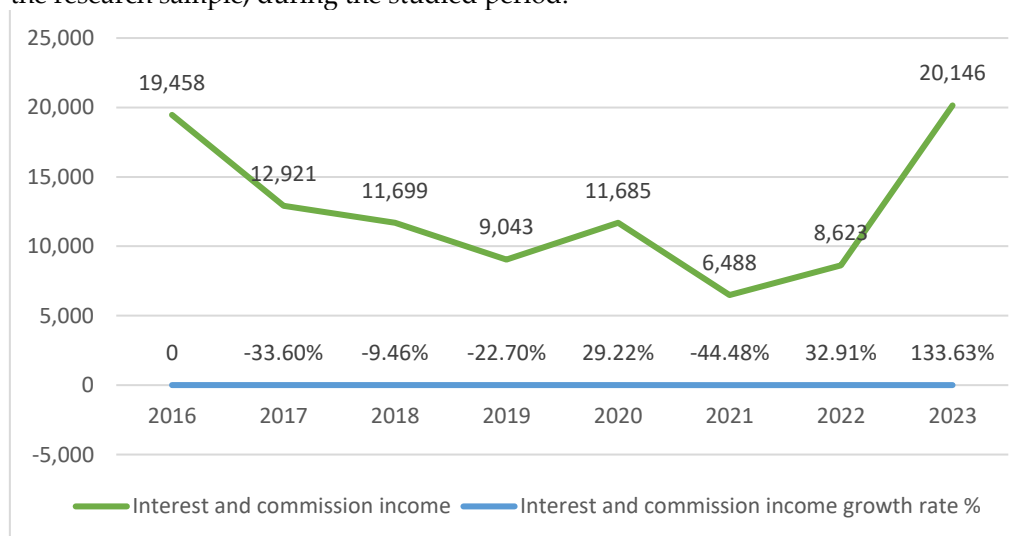


Figure 4. Development and Growth Rate of Interest and Commission Revenues for Gulf Commercial Bank (the research sample) for the period (2016-2023)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table No. (4)

Analysis of Banking Competitiveness in the Commercial Banks of the Research Sample

Analyzing banking competitiveness is an important measure, as it involves examining and analyzing financial data such as total assets, total revenues, and net income to identify the revenue-generating capabilities that enhance banking competitiveness. These capabilities are represented by the asset turnover rate and its growth rate, and the profit margin ratio and its growth rate. A comprehensive analysis of banking competitiveness will be conducted for Gulf Commercial Bank (the research sample) over eight years, extending from 2016 to 2023. The following is an analysis of the banking competitiveness indicators, represented as follows:

Revenue-Generating Capacity Index

These are analytical tools used to assess an organization's efficiency in generating revenue from its various resources. Among the most important indicators of revenue generation capacity and how to measure it are: • Asset Turnover:

The asset turnover ratio is a key indicator for measuring management efficiency in utilizing commercial bank assets to generate revenue. This ratio reflects the ability of commercial banks to invest their available resources to achieve the highest possible return. A higher ratio indicates improved operational efficiency and optimal asset utilization. The objective is to measure the efficiency of asset utilization in generating revenue. The mathematical formula is as follows: $\text{Asset Turnover} = (\text{Total Revenue} / \text{Total Assets}) * 100$. The following table shows the values obtained in the asset turnover ratio and its growth rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample.

Table 5. Asset Turnover Ratio and Growth Rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, Research Sample (Million Dinars)

Year/Bank	Gulf Commercial Bank			
Variables	Total assets	Total revenue	Asset turnover	Asset turnover growth rate
2016	802,022	26,096	3.25%	
2017	603,313	25,950	4.30%	32.19%
2018	578,337	16,617	2.87%	-33.20%
2019	549,146	10,919	1.99%	-30.80%
2020	510,798	12,500	2.45%	23.07%
2021	538,491	8,990	1.67%	-31.78%
2022	553,057	12,746	2.30%	38.05%
2023	572,650	22,103	3.86%	67.48%
Compound growth rate of asset turnover			2.17%	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the [16]

As shown in the table above, and after the analysis of total assets within the Financial Intelligence Index, Gulf Commercial Bank's total revenues were high in 2016, reaching 26,096 million dinars. This increase is attributed to the bank's improved efficiency in utilizing its financial assets to generate revenue (Gulf Commercial Bank, 2016). Revenues then decreased to (10,919) million dinars in 2019, fluctuating until they stabilized at (22,103) million dinars.

Furthermore, Gulf Commercial Bank's asset turnover was low in 2016 at (3.25%), but increased in 2017 to (4.30%). This indicates an improved ability of Gulf Commercial Bank to invest its assets and generate higher revenues compared to the previous year. This is attributed to increased lending activity or an improved structure of operating income. However, this indicator witnessed a significant decline during 2018 and 2019, falling to 2.87% and then to 1.99%, respectively. This reflects a weakness in asset utilization efficiency, possibly due to a decrease in operating income. The reason for this decline is attributed to the decrease in the ratio of total income to total assets, coupled with the ongoing security situation and the difficult and critical economic conditions facing our country, particularly the banking sector [16]

In 2020, the turnover index rose to 2.45%, indicating the beginning of a relative recovery. However, it declined again in 2021, registering 1.67%, its lowest level during the research period. This suggests continued operational challenges or weak investment activity.

In 2022 and 2023, the index showed a marked improvement, reaching 2.30% in 2022 and then rising significantly to 3.86% in 2023. This reflects a substantial improvement in asset utilization efficiency and may indicate a successful portfolio restructuring or a significant increase in revenues. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for Gulf Commercial Bank's asset turnover was 2.17%.

Asset turnover growth rates showed significant fluctuations throughout the research period. They recorded positive growth of 32.19% in 2017, then declined in 2019 and 2020, with negative rates exceeding 30.80% and 23.07%, respectively, confirming a period of operational inefficiency decline. The asset turnover growth index then rebounded strongly in 2022, registering 38.05%, and reached its highest growth rate in 2023 at approximately 67.48%, reflecting a notable positive shift in the bank's revenue-generating capacity. The following figure illustrates the asset turnover rate and growth rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, a sample of the research, for the study period.

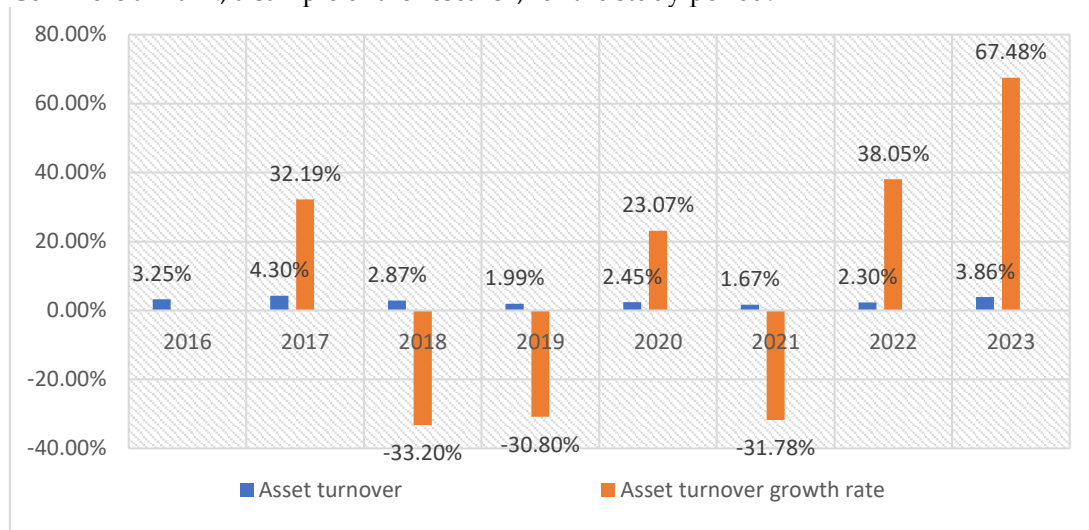


Figure 5. Asset Turnover and Growth Rate for Gulf Bank (Research Sample) for the Period (2016-2023)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table No. (5)

Profit Margin Indicator

This indicator can partially reflect the bank's competitiveness. It is considered one of the important financial indicators that reflects the bank's ability to generate profits from its revenues, which is linked to the bank's operational and pricing efficiency—two essential elements of competition. This indicator can be measured using the following equation: Profit Margin = (Net Profit / Gross Revenue) * 100. The following table shows the profit margin ratio for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample.

Table 6. Profit Margin Index and Growth Rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, Research Sample (Million Dinars)

Year / Bank	Gulf Commercial Bank			
	Total revenue	Net Profit	Profit margin	Profit margin growth rate
2016	26,083	5,870	22.51%	
2017	25,950	4,230	16.30%	-27.57%
2018	16,617	591	3.56%	-78.18%
2019	10,919	3,931-	-36.00%	-1112.24%
2020	12,460	1,477-	-11.85%	-67.07%
2021	8,990	5,039-	-56.05%	372.85%
2022	12,746	5,131-	-40.26%	-28.18%
2023	22,103	5,505	24.91%	-161.87%
Compound growth rate			1.28%	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the [16]

It is clear from the table above, and after mentioning the analysis of total revenues included in the banking competitiveness indicator represented by the asset turnover ratio

in Table 5, that Gulf Commercial Bank's net profit experienced significant fluctuations during the study period. It did not follow a stable trend but was affected by economic conditions and the level of banking revenues. In 2016, net profit reached (5,870) million dinars, a relatively good level compared to revenues of (26,083) million dinars, reflecting the bank's ability to achieve acceptable operating returns. It then declined to a negative level in 2022 (-5,131) million dinars, the lowest level during the study period. This is attributed to a significant decrease in revenues, which directly affected the bank's ability to generate profits. However, this decline was not sustained, and net profit subsequently recovered, stabilizing at 5,505 million dinars in 2023. This reflects the bank's improved ability to generate returns from its various banking activities. Overall, net profit during the study period was characterized by fluctuation and instability, although the general trend in the final year indicates a gradual improvement in the bank's profitability performance.

The profit margin is also a crucial indicator of a bank's efficiency in converting revenues into profits. In 2016, Gulf Commercial Bank's profit margin reached 22.51%, a healthy level reflecting reasonable efficiency in managing revenues and expenses. However, it subsequently declined to -36.00% in 2019. This decrease was attributed to a drop in net profit relative to total revenues, as well as the continued challenging security and economic conditions facing the country, particularly the banking sector [16]. However, this decline did not continue and fluctuated between rising and falling until it stabilized in 2023 at a rate of (24.91%).

The profit margin growth rate of Gulf Commercial Bank reflects the annual change in profitability efficiency. In 2017, the growth rate was -27.57% due to a decrease in the profit margin compared to 2016. In 2019, the bank experienced a continued sharp decline, reaching a growth rate of -1112.24% due to a significant drop in profitability. The margin then fluctuated between increases and decreases until it stabilized in 2023, recording a negative growth rate of -161.87%. Overall, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of the profit margin was 1.28% during the study period, indicating that the overall trend in profit margin growth was limited despite the significant fluctuations in annual growth rates. The following figure illustrates the profit margin and its growth rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, during the study period.

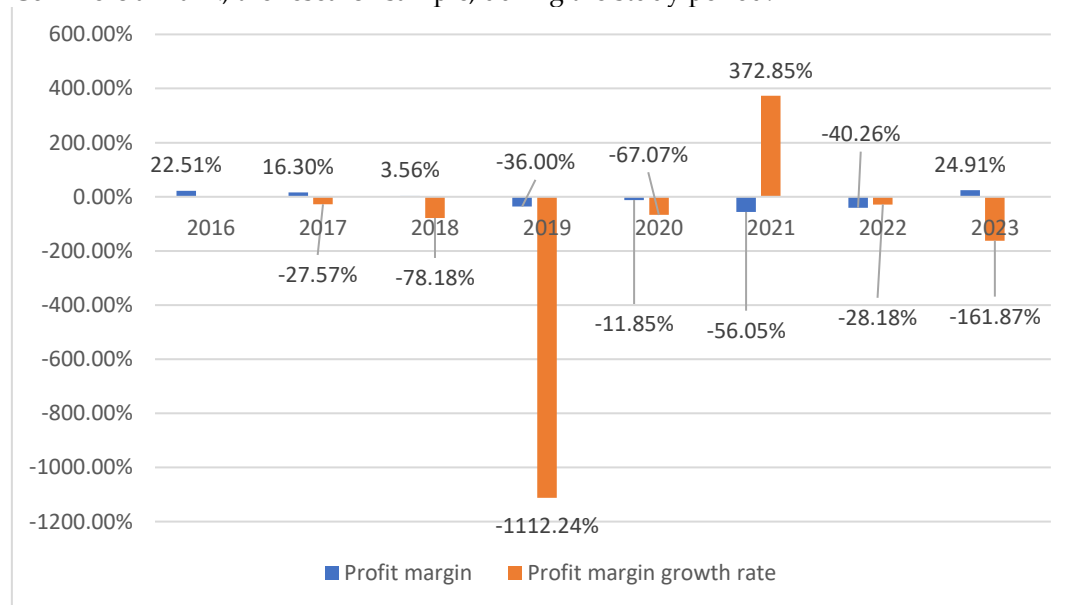


Figure 6. Profit Margin Index for Gulf Commercial Bank (Research Sample) for the Period (2016-2023)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table No. (6)

Financial Intelligence Strategies and Their Role in Enhancing the Banking Competitiveness of Gulf Commercial Bank (Research Sample) for the Period (2016-2023)

Utilizing financial intelligence strategies enables commercial banks to achieve higher operational efficiency and greater profitability. This directly impacts their competitiveness in the banking environment. Financial intelligence is the ability of banks to use financial information intelligently and strategically to make accurate decisions that contribute to enhancing financial performance and achieving objectives. Financial intelligence is not limited to collecting figures and data; it also includes analyzing them, understanding their impact, and using them in planning, control, and innovation.

Financial intelligence is a crucial element in the success of commercial banks in a rapidly changing and highly competitive banking environment. The higher the level of financial intelligence within banks, the greater their ability to innovate, differentiate themselves, and achieve market leadership. An analysis and comparison of the growth rates of financial intelligence strategies and their impact on the growth rates of banking competitiveness for the commercial banks in the research sample will be conducted to demonstrate the rise and fall of these levels over the period (2016 to 2026). This includes: **Comparative Analysis of the Growth Rate of the Financial Intelligence Index (Total Assets) and the Growth Rate of Banking Competitiveness Indicators:**

This section analyzes the relationship between the growth rate of (total assets), as one of the indicators of financial intelligence for banks, and the growth rates of asset turnover and profit margin, as indicators of banking competitiveness, during the study period. This analysis aims to demonstrate the nature of the correlation between the growth of a bank's financial resources and its ability to strengthen its competitive position in the banking market. It also helps to clarify the extent to which changes in total assets affect the development of the competitive performance of the banks under study during the specified years. The following table shows the growth rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (total assets) and the growth rates of the competitiveness indicators (asset turnover and profit margin) for the Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2023).

Table 7. Growth Rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (Total Assets) and Growth Rates of the Competitiveness Indicators (Asset Turnover and Profit Margin) for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample for the period (2016-2023)

Year / Growth Rate	Total asset growth rate %	Asset turnover growth rate %	Asset turnover growth rate %
2016	----	----	----
2017	-24.78%	32.19%	-27.57%
2018	-4.14%	-33.20%	-78.18%
2019	-5.05%	-30.80%	-1112.24%
2020	-6.98%	23.07%	-67.07%
2021	5.42%	-31.78%	372.85%
2022	2.70%	38.05%	-28.18%
2023	3.54%	67.48%	-161.87%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on financial data in Tables (1, 5, 6).

The data in the table above indicate a mixed relationship between the growth rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (total assets) and the banking competitiveness indicators (asset turnover and net profit margin) during the study period (2016–2023).

The relationship between the total asset growth rate and the asset turnover growth rate fluctuated during the study period. In 2017, the total asset growth rate decreased by (-24.78%), while the asset turnover growth rate increased to (32.19%), indicating an inverse relationship that suggests the bank's ability to improve asset utilization efficiency despite the decrease in assets. In 2018, assets continued to decline by (-4.14%),

accompanied by a decrease in the asset turnover growth rate to (-33.20%), reflecting a direct decline. In 2019, the decrease in assets was repeated by (-5.05%), with the asset turnover continuing to decline to (-30.80%), indicating the continued weakness in asset operating efficiency.

In 2020, asset growth decreased by 6.98%, while the asset turnover growth rate increased to 23.07%, reflecting improved operational efficiency despite the decline in assets. In 2021, asset growth rose to 5.42%, while asset turnover fell to -31.78%, indicating that asset expansion did not translate into improved utilization efficiency. However, in 2022 and 2023, asset growth rates increased to 2.70% and 3.54%, respectively, accompanied by a significant rise in the asset turnover growth rate to 38.05% and 67.48%, demonstrating a strong positive correlation and reflecting improved asset utilization efficiency.

Regarding the relationship between asset growth rate and net profit margin growth rate, it is noted that in 2017, asset growth decreased by 24.78%, accompanied by a decrease in the profit margin to 27.57%, indicating a direct correlation. In 2021, asset growth increased to 5.42%, accompanied by a significant increase in the profit margin to 372.85%, demonstrating a strong positive correlation that reflects the bank's ability to utilize assets to generate higher profits. However, 2022 and 2023 witnessed a decline in asset growth, while the profit margin decreased to 28.18% and 161.87%, respectively, indicating a weak impact of asset expansion on profitability. The following figure illustrates the total asset growth rate, asset turnover growth rate, and profit margin growth rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period 2016-2023.

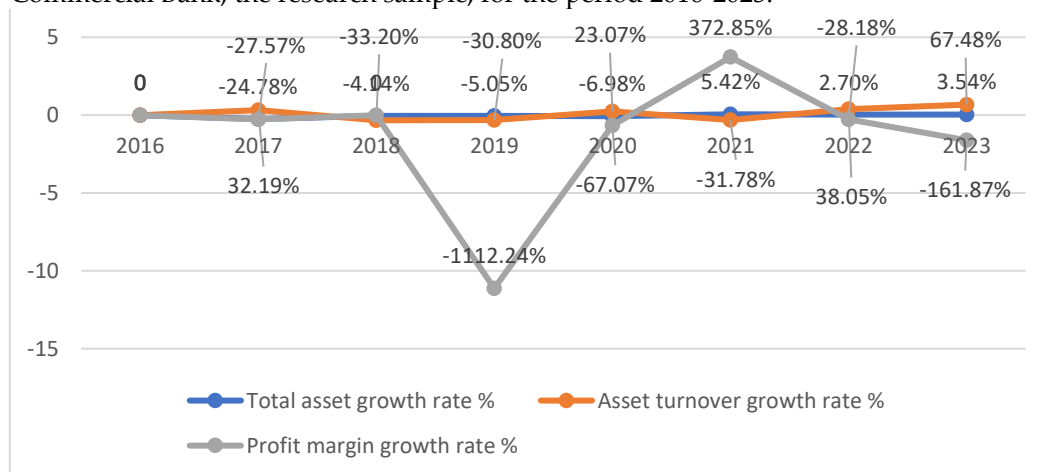


Figure 7. The growth rate of total assets, asset turnover, and profit margin for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2020).

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table 7.

Comparative Analysis of the Growth Rate of the Financial Intelligence Index (Total Liabilities) and the Growth Rate of Banking Competitiveness Indicators

The analysis of the relationship between the Financial Intelligence Index, represented by the growth rate of (Total Liabilities), and the Banking Competitiveness Indicators, represented by the growth rate of (Asset Turnover) and the growth rate of (Profit Margin), aims to demonstrate the bank's ability to utilize its financial resources to enhance its operational efficiency and profitability. The growth of liabilities reflects the size of the resources available to the bank, which can contribute to increasing banking activity and improving asset utilization. Therefore, studying this relationship during the research period helps to clarify the extent to which financial intelligence contributes to enhancing the competitiveness of the bank under study. The following table shows the growth rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (total liabilities) and the Competitiveness Indicators (asset turnover and profit margin) for Gulf Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2023).

Table 8. Growth Rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (Total Liabilities) and Competitiveness Indicators (Asset Turnover and Profit Margin) for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample for the period (2016-2023)

Year / Growth Rate	Total Liabilities Growth Rate %	Asset turnover growth rate %	Profit margin growth rate %
2016	-----	----	----
2017	-41.68%	32.19%	-27.57%
2018	-6.57%	-33.20%	-78.18%
2019	-8.12%	-30.80%	-1112.24%
2020	-16.01%	23.07%	-67.07%
2021	15.00%	-31.78%	372.85%
2022	4.38%	38.05%	-28.18%
2023	2.77%	67.48%	-161.87%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on financial data in Tables 2, 5, and 6.

The data in the table indicates an unstable relationship between the growth rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (FII), represented by total liabilities, and the banking competitiveness indicators, represented by asset turnover and net profit margin, during the study period (2016–2023). However, this relationship tends to be positive in years when liabilities are utilized. We observe that the growth rate of total liabilities decreased in 2017 by (-41.68%), while the growth rate of asset turnover increased to (32.19%), and the growth rate of the profit margin decreased to (-27.57%).

This indicates that the bank was able to improve the efficiency of its asset utilization despite the decrease in funding sources, but this did not translate into a positive impact on profitability. In 2018, the liabilities growth rate decreased by 6.57%, and the asset turnover growth rate declined to 33.20%, while the profit margin growth rate fell to 78.18%. This indicates a direct correlation between the decline in the liabilities growth rate and the decrease in operational capacity and profitability. In 2020, liabilities decreased by 16.01%, while the asset turnover rate increased to 23.07%, and the profit margin declined to 67.07%, indicating continued weak profitability.

However, in 2021, the liabilities growth rate increased by 15.00%, but the asset turnover growth rate decreased to 31.78%, while the profit margin growth rate increased to 372.85%. This demonstrates improved profitability resulting from improved operational management, despite the decline in asset utilization efficiency. In 2023, the growth rate of total liabilities decreased by 2.77%, while the asset turnover growth rate increased significantly to 67.48%. However, the profit margin growth rate declined to -161.87%, indicating improved operational performance without a corresponding improvement in profitability. The following figure illustrates the growth rates of total liabilities, asset turnover, and profit margins for the Gulf Commercial Banks sampled for the period 2016-2023.

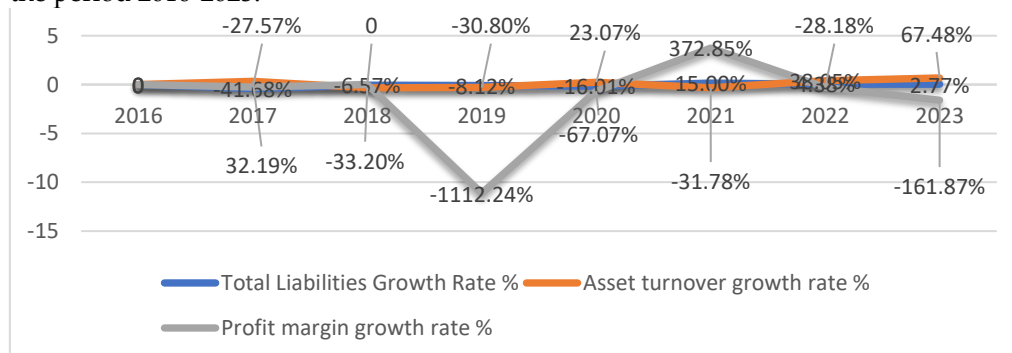


Figure 8. The growth rate of total liabilities, asset turnover, and profit margin for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2023).

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table 8.

Comparative Analysis of the Growth Rate of the Financial Intelligence Index (Equity) and the Growth Rate of Banking Competitiveness Indicators

This analysis reveals the nature of the relationship between the Financial Intelligence Index (Equity Growth Rate) and the Banking Competitiveness Indicators (Asset Turnover Growth Rate and Profit Margin Growth Rate) for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, during the period (2016-2023). It focuses on tracking the annual changes in these indicators and analyzing their upward and downward trends to reveal the extent of their correlation. It also seeks to determine the type of relationship (direct or inverse) and its stability, thus demonstrating the banks' ability to translate their financial efficiency into competitive performance and sustainable profitability. The following table shows the growth rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (equity) and the competitiveness indicators (asset turnover and profit margin) for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2023).

Table 9. Growth Rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (equity) and the Competitiveness Indicators (asset turnover and profit margin) for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2023)

Year / Growth Rate	Equity Growth Rate %	Asset turnover growth rate %	Profit margin growth rate%
2016	-----	----	----
2017	0.99%	32.19%	-27.57%
2018	-2.00%	-33.20%	-78.18%
2019	-2.47%	-30.80%	-1112.24%
2020	0.15%	23.07%	-67.07%
2021	-0.93%	-31.78%	372.85%
2022	1.42%	38.05%	-28.18%
2023	4.15%	67.48%	-161.87%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on financial data in Tables (3, 5, 6).

The data in the table above shows a clear fluctuation in the relationship between financial intelligence indicators and competitiveness indicators during the study period for the commercial banks in the research sample (2016-2023). In 2017, the equity growth rate fluctuated throughout the study period, reaching approximately (0.99%), accompanied by an increase in the asset turnover growth rate to (32.19%), while the profit margin decreased to -27.57%. This indicates a weak ability of the bank to convert operational efficiency into profits. In 2018, the variance continued to decrease to (-2.00%), with a further decline in the asset turnover growth rate to (-33.20%), while the profit margin fell to (-78.18%), reflecting an inverse relationship. In 2020, there was a slight improvement in the equity growth rate (0.15%), accompanied by a rise in asset turnover (23.07%) and a significant increase in the profit margin (372.85%). Equity growth also improved in 2022 (1.42%), along with an improvement in asset turnover to (38.05%), but the profit margin remained negative (-28.18%), indicating a weak relationship. In 2023, equity growth increased by (4.15%) and asset turnover by (67.48%), but the profit margin declined to -161.87%, reflecting an inverse relationship. Therefore, the relationship is characterized by instability and tends towards direct growth, with some inverse deviations occurring in certain years.

The overall conclusion of this analysis shows that the relationship between financial intelligence indicators and competitiveness indicators varies across banks, tending towards a direct relationship in some banks (such as Gulf Bank). This indicates that achieving competitiveness depends not only on efficient asset utilization but also requires effective cost management and profitability policies. The following figure illustrates the equity growth rate, asset turnover growth rate, and profit margin growth rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2023).

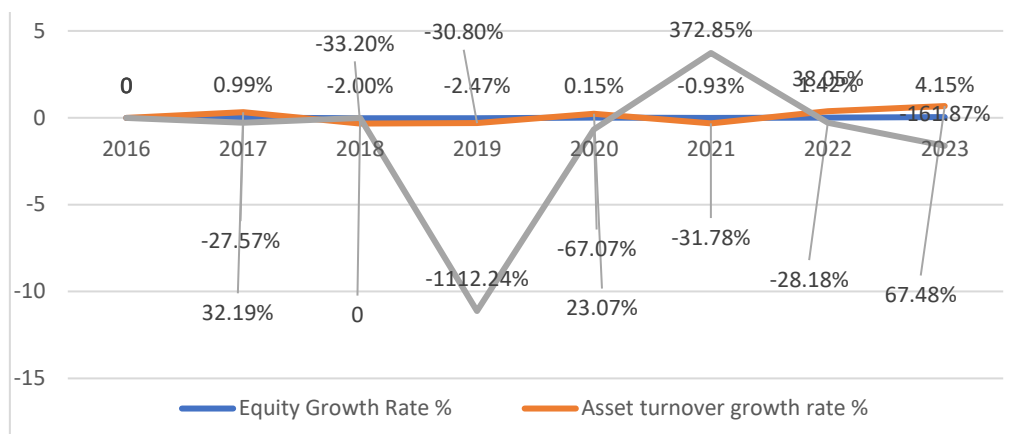


Figure 9. The growth rate of equity, asset turnover, and profit margin for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period 2016-2023.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the financial data in Table 9.

Comparative Analysis of the Growth Rate of the Financial Intelligence Index (Interest and Commission Income) and the Growth Rate of Competitiveness Indicators

The relationship between the growth rate of interest and commission income, as an indicator of financial intelligence, and banking competitiveness indicators, is a crucial topic in analyzing the financial performance of commercial banks, as revenues represent one of the most prominent aspects of financial intelligence in banks. Both the asset turnover rate and the profit margin reflect the efficiency of resource utilization and the bank's ability to achieve profitable returns. Therefore, studying this relationship contributes to demonstrating the extent to which banks are able to translate revenue growth into operational efficiency and profitability that enhances their competitive position. The following table shows the growth rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (interest and commission income) and the competitiveness indicators (asset turnover and profit margin) for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2023).

Table 10. Growth Rates of the Financial Intelligence Index (interest and commission income) and the competitiveness indicators (asset turnover and profit margin) for Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, for the period (2016-2023)

Year / Growth Rate	Interest and commission income growth rate %	Asset turnover growth rate %	Profit margin growth rate %
2016	----	----	----
2017	%33.60-	32.19%	-27.57%
2018	%9.46-	-33.20%	-78.18%
2019	%22.70-	-30.80%	1112.24%-
2020	%29.22	23.07%	-67.07%
2021	%44.48-	-31.78%	372.85%
2022	%32.91	38.05%	-28.18%
2023	%133.63	67.48%	-161.87%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on financial data in Tables (4, 5, 6).

The table above shows that the relationship between the growth rate of interest and commission income, the growth rate of asset turnover, and the growth rate of profit margin was characterized by fluctuation and instability during the study period for the commercial banks in the research sample (2016-2023). It was found that:

In 2017, interest and commission income decreased by (-33.60%), accompanied by an increase in the asset turnover rate by (32.19%), indicating a direct inverse relationship

despite the decrease in income, reflecting the impact of efficient asset utilization management.

In 2020, this trend continued, with the revenue growth rate increasing to (29.22%), but the asset turnover rate decreased to the desired level of (23.07%), reflecting a clear positive impact of the independent variable on operational efficiency. However, in 2021, revenue growth declined to -44.48%, while asset turnover decreased to -31.78%, indicating a decline in asset utilization efficiency due to weak revenue growth.

In 2022 and 2023, revenues increased to 32.91% and 133.63%, respectively. This was accompanied by an improvement in asset turnover to 38.05% and then 67.48%, demonstrating a return to the positive relationship and an improved ability for the bank to utilize revenue growth to enhance asset efficiency.

Regarding the relationship with profit margins, it was found to be weak or inverse in most years. The increase in revenues did not translate into a positive impact on profitability, as profit margins recorded sharp declines, such as -1112.24% in 2019 and -161.87% in 2023. This indicates that the impact of revenue growth on profitability was limited or negative due to increased costs or weak financial management. The overall conclusion of this analysis shows that the impact of interest and commission income growth rate, as an independent variable, on competitiveness indicators was stronger on asset turnover than on profit margin. Furthermore, the relationship was often unstable or inverse, indicating that the bank under study faces challenges in translating revenue growth into operational efficiency and sustainable profitability. The following figure illustrates the interest and commission income growth rate, asset turnover growth rate, and profit margin growth rate for Gulf Commercial Bank, the study sample, for the period (2016-2023).

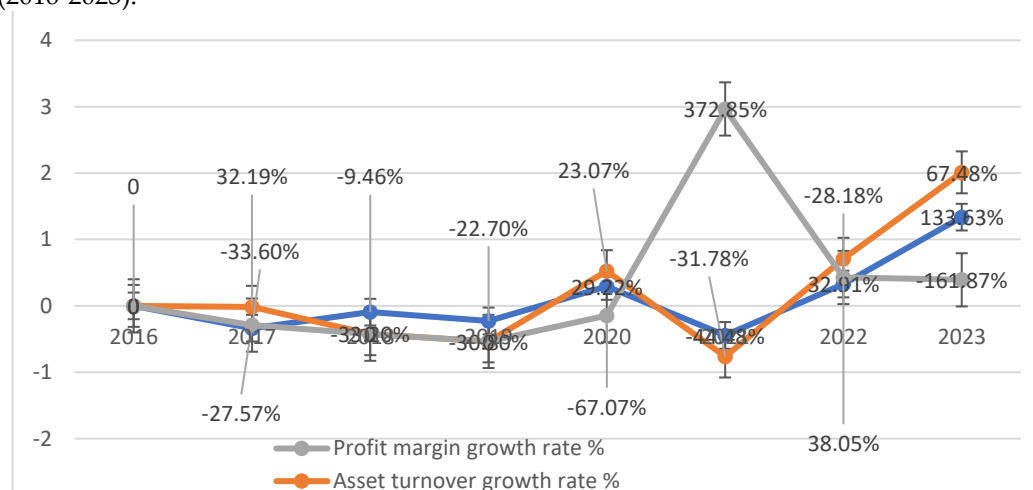


Figure 10. Interest and Commission Income Growth Rate, Asset Turnover Growth Rate, and Profit Margin Growth Rate for Gulf Commercial Bank (the research sample) for the period (2016-2023).

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on financial data in Table No. (10)

4. Conclusion

1. The research results indicate a clear fluctuation in the total asset growth rates of Gulf Commercial Bank (the research sample) during the study period (2016-2023). This reflects instability in the asset expansion policy, which in turn affected banking competitiveness indicators.
2. It is concluded that achieving financial intelligence in banks does not depend solely on increasing the size of assets, but rather, to a greater extent, on the efficiency of their management and deployment in banking activities that generate higher returns and profitability.
3. It is concluded that enhancing banking competitiveness requires achieving a balance between asset expansion and improving the efficiency of asset utilization. Asset growth should contribute to supporting profitability and increasing

operational efficiency, rather than leading to an increase in underutilized or low-return assets.

4. The results show that the high growth rate of total assets for the Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, does not necessarily lead to an improvement in the growth rate of the net profit margin, as some years witnessed an increase in assets compared to a decrease in the profit margin, indicating that the expansion of assets was not always directed towards the most profitable banking activities.
5. The analysis of Gulf Commercial Bank, the research sample, revealed that the growth rate of total liabilities is a significant source of funding for banking activity. However, its impact on banking competitiveness depends largely on the efficiency of resource management. In some years, increased liabilities led to improved asset turnover and increased banking activity, but this was not always reflected in profit margins. This indicates that achieving competitiveness depends not only on increasing funding sources but also on the efficiency of their utilization in banking operations.
6. It is concluded that increased growth in interest and commission income does not necessarily lead to improved profit margins. Several years have witnessed increased revenue growth coupled with decreased profitability, reflecting a flaw in cost management or a weakness in resource allocation efficiency.
7. It is concluded that Gulf Commercial Bank demonstrated an improvement in operational efficiency (asset turnover), but this was not consistently reflected in profitability, indicating a gap between operational and profit performance.

Recommendations

1. The need to implement smart mechanisms in managing financial intelligence indicators to enhance its competitiveness in banking markets, especially in light of the rapid changes in the financial environment.
2. Restructuring the financial obligations of Gulf Commercial Bank (the study sample) and streamlining funding sources to reduce costs and improve risk management, thereby contributing to increased performance efficiency and greater financial stability.
3. Promoting a culture of financial intelligence within the bank through continuous banking awareness, developing the analytical capabilities of banking staff, and linking senior management decisions to smart financial indicators.
4. Enhancing the efficiency of asset management by directing increases in total assets towards the most profitable investment and lending activities, thereby improving asset turnover and enhancing the bank's competitiveness.
5. Promoting the use of modern financial technologies and banking innovations to help banks improve the management of their financial resources and increase the efficiency of their operational processes, which contributes to improving profitability and operational efficiency indicators.
6. Conducting periodic analyses of the bank's financial and banking intelligence indicators to monitor the relationship between asset growth and competitiveness indicators, thus helping bank management make more efficient financial and investment decisions.
7. The bank must enhance the efficiency of its operational cost management to ensure that revenue growth translates into actual profits, rather than merely nominal revenue growth.
8. Developing advanced financial intelligence and financial analysis systems to improve the quality of investment and operational decisions within the bank.

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