



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

FIRST DIVISION

PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES,
Plaintiff-Appellee,

G.R. No. 203068

Present:

LEONARDO-DE CASTRO,^{*} J.,
Acting Chairperson,
CARPIO,^{**}
MENDOZA,^{***}
REYES, and
PERLAS-BERNABE,^{****} JJ.

- versus -

RYAN FRIAS y GALANG a.k.a.
"TAGADOG",
Accused-Appellant.

Promulgated:

SEP 18 2013

X-----X

RESOLUTION

REYES, J.:

The Court resolves in this Resolution the appeal from the Decision¹ dated January 30, 2012 of the Court of Appeals (CA) in CA-G.R. CR-HC No. 04540. The CA affirmed with modification the Decision² dated September 30, 2008 of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) of Manila, Branch 48, in Crim. Case No. 05-236370, finding Ryan Frias y Galang (accused-appellant) guilty beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of rape, as defined in Article 266-A of the Revised Penal Code.

^{*} Acting Chairperson per Special Order No. 1549 dated September 16, 2013.

^{**} Acting member per Special Order No. 1550 dated September 16, 2013.

^{***} Acting member per Special Order No. 1545 dated September 16, 2013.

^{****} Acting member per Special Order No. 1537 (Revised) dated September 6, 2013.

¹ Penned by Associate Justice Amy C. Lazaro-Javier, with Associate Justices Remedios A. Salazar-Fernando and Mario V. Lopez, concurring; *rollo*, pp. 2-11.

² Issued by Judge Silverio Q. Castillo; CA *rollo*, pp. 11-19.

The Facts

The accused-appellant was charged in an Information for the crime of rape, docketed as Criminal Case No. 05-236370 before the RTC, allegedly committed as follows:

That on or about July 9, 2004, in the City of Manila, Philippines, the said accused, by means of force and intimidation, did then and there, willfully, unlawfully and knowingly have carnal knowledge upon the person of [AAA]³, by poking a fan knife at her, ordering her to undress and inserting his penis into her vagina, against her will and consent, to her damage and prejudice.

Contrary to law.⁴

Upon arraignment, the accused-appellant pleaded “not guilty” to the offense charged.⁵ During the pre-trial conference, the parties stipulated on the following: *first*, the identity of AAA; and *second*, that the accused-appellant is the one charged in the Information cited above.⁶ Trial on the merits ensued thereafter.

The prosecution’s version of the facts, which was adopted by the RTC, relied heavily on the testimony of AAA. AAA alleged that, on July 9, 2004, at around 3:00 p.m., while she was on her way to take a bath in the comfort room at the back of their house, she was suddenly pulled by the accused-appellant to BBB’s room. The accused-appellant was then staying with BBB, whose house was just adjacent to AAA’s house. AAA was only thirteen (13) years old at the time of the incident.⁷

Once inside the room, AAA claimed that the accused-appellant locked the door with a chain and pushed her into a bamboo bed. He then instructed AAA to keep quiet and remove her clothes. AAA complied out of fear since he poked a fan knife at her neck. She then claimed that he removed his clothes, went on top of her, spread her legs, and inserted his penis into her vagina.⁸

The accused-appellant stayed on top of AAA for about fifteen minutes. Thereafter, AAA alleged that the accused-appellant threatened to kill her and her siblings should she tell anyone about what he did. AAA

³ The real name of the victim and the immediate family members other than the accused are withheld pursuant to the Court’s Decision in *People v. Cabalquinto*, 533 Phil. 703 (2006) and the Resolution in A.M. No. 04-11-09- SC dated September 19, 2006.

⁴ CA *rollo*, p. 32.

⁵ Id. at 11.

⁶ Id.

⁷ Id. at 12.

⁸ Id.

hurriedly dressed up and went home. She did not dare tell anyone about the incident, fearing that the accused-appellant would make good his threat.⁹

After several months, AAA's grandmother noticed that her abdomen was getting bigger. AAA was then constrained to tell her grandmother and mother about what the accused-appellant did to her. Whereupon, AAA, accompanied by her grandmother and mother, reported the incident to their *barangay* chairman and the police station. At the police station, AAA was referred to be examined at the Philippine General Hospital (PGH).¹⁰

At the PGH, AAA was examined by Dr. Irene D. Baluyot, a physician at the Child Protection Unit of the PGH, who found that there was clear evidence that AAA was sexually abused considering the lacerations found in her hymen. At the time that AAA was examined at the PGH, she was already about thirty (30) weeks pregnant.¹¹

On the other hand, the accused-appellant vehemently denied that he raped AAA, claiming that he and AAA have been in a relationship for about three (3) months prior to the incident. He averred that, at the time of the incident, it was AAA who went to his room where they talked for a while and thereafter had sexual intercourse. After the incident, the accused-appellant did not see AAA anymore. He further alleged that he only learned of AAA's complaint against him through his friend.¹²

The Ruling of the RTC

On September 30, 2008, the RTC rendered a Decision¹³ finding the accused-appellant guilty beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of rape, sentencing him to suffer the penalty of *reclusion perpetua* and directing him to pay ₱50,000.00 as moral damages, ₱25,000.00 as exemplary damages, and the costs of suit.¹⁴

The RTC did not give credence to the accused-appellant's claim that the sexual intercourse between him and AAA was consensual. The RTC pointed out that the accused-appellant's defense that he and AAA were lovers is but a self-serving statement conveniently concocted by him in an effort to exculpate himself from criminal liability. That if indeed they were in a relationship, he should have immediately stated such fact when he was arrested by the authorities.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Id. at 13.

¹² Id. at 14.

¹³ Id. at 11-19.

¹⁴ Id. at 18-19.

Unperturbed, the accused-appellant appealed the RTC's Decision dated September 30, 2008 to the CA.¹⁵

The Ruling of the CA

On January 30, 2012, the CA rendered the herein assailed decision which affirmed the RTC's Decision dated September 30, 2008, albeit with the modification that the accused-appellant was ordered to pay civil indemnity in the amount of ₱50,000.00.

The CA gave more credence to the testimony of AAA as against the accused-appellant, asserting that AAA would not make such accusation against him and subject herself to public trial if indeed she had not been raped. The CA opined that, other than his own self-serving testimony, the accused-appellant failed to show any other evidence that would prove that he and AAA were in a relationship.

The CA further pointed out that AAA's alleged lack of resistance during the sexual act does not mean that AAA consented thereto. The CA stressed that the act of poking a knife at the neck of a thirteen-year old victim, by itself, strongly suggests force that is sufficient to bring the young girl to submission.

As to AAA's delay in relaying what the accused-appellant did to her, the CA opined that it is expected that a young girl, such as AAA, would be hesitant or disinclined to cry out in public and relate a painful and horrible experience of sexual violation, especially in the face of threats of physical violence.

Hence, this appeal.

Both the accused-appellant and the Office of the Solicitor General manifested that they would no longer file with the Court supplemental briefs, and adopted instead their respective briefs with the CA.¹⁶

¹⁵ Id. at 20.

¹⁶ *Rollo*, pp. 22-24; 26-27.

Issue

Essentially, the issue set forth by the accused-appellant for this Court's resolution is whether the CA erred in affirming the RTC's Decision dated September 30, 2008 which found him guilty beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of rape.¹⁷

In an effort to avoid criminal liability, the accused-appellant maintains that he and AAA were lovers and that the sexual tryst that was had between them was but a consummation of their relationship. He likewise alleged that AAA did not offer any resistance during their sexual tryst and that it took AAA several months before she accused him of raping her. The foregoing, the accused-appellant claimed, negates AAA's accusation against him.

The Court's Ruling

The appeal is dismissed for lack of merit.

The crime of rape is defined under Article 266-A of the Revised Penal Code, which states that:

Art. 266-A. Rape: When and How Committed.—Rape is committed:

1. **By a man who shall have carnal knowledge of a woman** under any of the following circumstances:

- a. **Through force, threat, or intimidation;**
- b. When the offended party is deprived of reason or otherwise unconscious;
- c. By means of fraudulent machination or grave abuse of authority; and
- d. When the offended party is under twelve (12) years of age or is demented, even though none of the circumstances mentioned above be present.

2. By any person who, under any of the circumstances mentioned in paragraph 1 hereof, shall commit an act of sexual assault by inserting his penis into another person's mouth or anal orifice, or any instrument or object, into the genital or anal orifice of another person. (Emphasis ours)

¹⁷

CA Rollo, p. 35.

The elements necessary to sustain a conviction for rape are: (1) that the accused had carnal knowledge of the victim; and (2) that said act was accomplished (a) through the use of force or intimidation, or (b) when the victim is deprived of reason or otherwise unconscious, or (c) when the victim is under 12 years of age or is demented.¹⁸

That the accused-appellant had carnal knowledge of AAA is not disputed; he does not deny having sexual intercourse with AAA on July 9, 2004. The only question that has to be resolved then is whether the sexual intercourse between the accused-appellant and AAA is indeed consensual or was consummated through force or intimidation.

It is well-settled that, in a criminal case, factual findings of the trial court are generally accorded great weight and respect on appeal, especially when such findings are supported by substantial evidence on record. It is only in exceptional circumstances, such as when the trial court overlooked material and relevant matters, that this Court will re-calibrate and evaluate the factual findings of the court below.¹⁹

The Court sees no reason to depart from the foregoing rule.

The accused-appellant's claim that he and AAA were lovers, being an affirmative defense, must be established by convincing evidence — some documentary and/or other evidence like mementos, love letters, notes, photographs and the like.²⁰ However, other than his self-serving testimony, no convincing evidence was presented to substantiate his claim. Thus, the lower courts aptly discredited the defense interposed by the accused-appellant.

Further, the lack of resistance on the part of AAA as claimed by the accused-appellant, even assuming it to be true, does not mean that AAA willingly surrendered to his sexual desires. It bears stressing that physical resistance need not be established in rape cases when threats and intimidation are employed and the victim submits herself to the embrace of her rapist because of fear.²¹

In *People v. Sgt. Bayani*,²² the Court explained that:

[I]t must be emphasized that force as an element of rape need not be irresistible; it need but be present, and so long as it brings about the desired result, all considerations of whether it was more or less irresistible is beside the point. So must it likewise be for intimidation which is addressed to the mind of the victim

¹⁸ *People v. Perez*, G.R. No. 191265, September 14, 2011, 657 SCRA 734, 739.

¹⁹ *See Seguritan v. People*, G.R. No. 172896, April 19, 2010, 618 SCRA 406.

²⁰ *See People v. Dumadag*, G.R. No. 176740, June 22, 2011, 652 SCRA 535, 547-548; *People v. Corpuz*, G.R. No. 175836, January 30, 2009, 577 SCRA 465, 471.

²¹ *People v. Arnaiz*, 538 Phil. 479, 497 (2006); *People v. Adajio*, 397 Phil. 354, 371-372 (2000).

²² 331 Phil. 169 (1996).

and is therefore subjective. Intimidation must be viewed in light of the victim's perception and judgment at the time of the commission of the crime and not by any hard and fast rule; it is therefore enough that it produces fear – fear that if the victim does not yield to the bestial demands of the accused, something would happen to her at that moment or even thereafter as when she is threatened with death if she reports the incident. **Intimidation includes the moral kind as the fear caused by threatening the girl with a knife or pistol. And where such intimidation exists and the victim is cowed into submission as a result thereof, thereby rendering resistance futile, it would be extremely unreasonable, to say the least, to expect the victim to resist with all her might and strength. If resistance would nevertheless be futile because of continuing intimidation, then offering none at all would not mean consent to the assault as to make the victim's participation in the sexual act voluntary.**²³ (Emphasis ours)

That the accused-appellant held a knife against AAA undoubtedly produced fear in the latter's mind that the former would kill her if she would not submit to his sexual design. The act of holding a knife by itself is strongly suggestive of force or, at least, intimidation, and threatening the victim with a knife is sufficient to bring a woman into submission.²⁴ It would thus be unreasonable, to say the least, to require AAA to establish that she indeed forcibly resisted the accused-appellant's sexual aggression.

Furthermore, contrary to the accused-appellant's insinuation, AAA's delay in filing a complaint against the accused-appellant is not an *indicia* of consent to the latter's sexual design. Delay in reporting an incident of rape does not create any doubt over the credibility of the complainant nor can it be taken against her.²⁵ That it took several months before AAA was able to file a complaint against the accused-appellant does not tarnish her credibility and the veracity of her allegations. The threat made by the accused-appellant against her life and that of her siblings is sufficient reason to cow AAA into silence, especially considering that she was just a minor then.

Moreover, the delay in revealing the commission of a crime such as rape does not necessarily render such charge unworthy of belief. This is because the victim may choose to keep quiet rather than expose her defilement to the harsh glare of public scrutiny. Only when the delay is unreasonable or unexplained may it work to discredit the complainant.²⁶

²³ Id. at 193, citing *People v. Grefiel*, G.R. No. 77228, November 13, 1992, 215 SCRA 596, 608-609.

²⁴ See *People v. Saludo*, G.R. No. 178406, April 6, 2011, 647 SCRA 374, 393; *People v. Buates*, 455 Phil. 688, 702 (2003).

²⁵ *People v. Montefalcon*, 364 Phil. 646, 656 (1999).

²⁶ *People v. Navarette, Jr.*, G.R. No. 191365, February 22, 2012, 666 SCRA 689, 704.

Likewise, it is highly unlikely that AAA, then only thirteen (13) years old, would feign a traumatizing experience merely out of spite towards the accused-appellant. No sane girl would concoct a story of defloration, allow an examination of her private parts and subject herself to public trial or ridicule if she has not in truth, been a victim of rape and impelled to seek justice for the wrong done to her. Youth and immaturity are generally badges of truth and sincerity. The weight of such testimony may be countered by physical evidence to the contrary, or indubitable proof that the accused could not have committed the rape, but in the absence of such countervailing proof, the testimony shall be accorded utmost value.²⁷

As regards the penalty imposed on the accused-appellant, the Court finds the same to be consistent with Article 266-B²⁸ of the Revised Penal Code. The prosecution was able to sufficiently allege in the Information, and establish during trial, that a knife was used in the commission of rape. Under Article 266-B of the Revised Penal Code, the crime of rape under paragraph 1 of Article 266-A, when committed with the use of a deadly weapon, is punishable by *reclusion perpetua* to death.

Since *reclusion perpetua* and death are two indivisible penalties, Article 63 of the Revised Penal Code applies; when there are neither mitigating nor aggravating circumstances in the commission of the deed, as in this case, the lesser penalty shall be applied. Since no other qualifying or aggravating circumstance was alleged in the Information, the RTC and the CA correctly imposed the penalty of *reclusion perpetua* on the accused-appellant.²⁹ The Court however clarify that the accused-appellant shall be ineligible for parole, a requirement under Section 3 of Republic Act No. 9346³⁰ that was not mentioned in the assailed CA’s Decision and which, must then be rectified by this Resolution.

Likewise, the Court sustains the award of moral damages and civil indemnity in favor of AAA. Moral damages in rape cases should be awarded without need of showing that the victim suffered trauma or mental, physical, and psychological sufferings constituting the basis thereof.³¹ Also, the award of civil indemnity to the rape victim is mandatory upon the finding that rape took place.³² Considering that the penalty imposable is *reclusion perpetua*, the Court affirms the award of ₱50,000.00 as moral

²⁷ See *People v. Bon*, 536 Phil. 897, 915 (2006).
²⁸ Art. 266-B. *Penalty*. – x x x
x x x x
Whenever the rape is committed with the use of a deadly weapon or by two or more persons, the penalty shall be *reclusion perpetua* to death.
x x x x
²⁹ See *People v. Delabajan*, G.R. No. 192180, March 21, 2012, 668 SCRA 859.
³⁰ An Act Prohibiting the Imposition of Death Penalty.
³¹ *People of the Philippines v. Rolando Cabungan*, G.R. No. 189355, January 23, 2013.
³² *People v. Banig*, G.R. No. 177137, August 23, 2012, 679 SCRA 133, 149.

damages and ₱50,000.00 as civil indemnity, based on prevailing jurisprudence.³³

However, the exemplary damages awarded by the RTC, as affirmed by the CA must be increased from ₱25,000.00 to ₱30,000.00 in conformity with prevailing jurisprudence.³⁴ The award of exemplary damages is justified under Article 2229 of the Civil Code to set a public example or correction for the public good.³⁵


In addition, and in conformity with current policy, the Court imposes interest on all monetary awards for damages at the rate of six percent (6%) *per annum* from the date of finality of this Resolution until fully paid.³⁶

WHEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing disquisitions, the appeal is **DISMISSED**. The Decision dated January 30, 2012 of the Court of Appeals in CA-G.R. CR-HC No. 04540 is hereby **AFFIRMED WITH MODIFICATION** in that accused-appellant Ryan Frias y Galang, is sentenced to suffer the penalty of *reclusion perpetua*, without eligibility for parole. The accused-appellant is likewise ordered to pay ₱30,000.00 as exemplary damages and to pay interest on all monetary award for damages at the rate of six percent (6%) *per annum* from the date of finality of this Resolution until fully satisfied.

SO ORDERED.


BIENVENIDO L. REYES
Associate Justice

WE CONCUR:

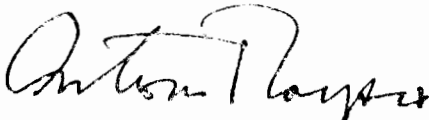

TERESITA J. LEONARDO-DE CASTRO
Associate Justice
Acting Chairperson

³³ *Sison v. People*, G.R. No. 187229, February 22, 2012, 666 SCRA 645, 667.


³⁴ *People of the Philippines v. Rolando Cabungan*, supra note 31.

³⁵ *People v. Delabajan*, supra note 29, at 868.

³⁶ *People of the Philippines v. Jonathan "Uto" Veloso y Rama*, G.R. No. 188849, February 13, 2013.

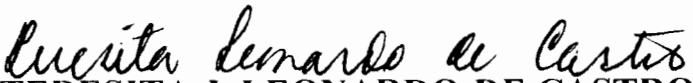

ANTONIO T. CARPIO
Associate Justice


JOSE CATRAL MENDOZA
Associate Justice


ESTELA M. PERLAS-BERNABE
Associate Justice


ATTESTATION

I attest that the conclusions in the above Resolution had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Decision.


TERESITA J. LEONARDO-DE CASTRO
Associate Justice
Acting Chairperson

CERTIFICATION

Pursuant to Section 13, Article VIII of the Constitution, and the Division Chairperson's Attestation, I certify that the conclusions in the above Resolution had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.


ANTONIO T. CARPIO
Acting Chief Justice