

Title: AAA v. BBB

Facts:

AAA, a flight attendant, and BBB, a chef working in Singapore, were married on August 1, 2006, in Quezon City, Philippines. They have two children. After working in Singapore, BBB obtained permanent resident status but allegedly began having an affair with Lisel Mok. AAA claims that BBB's actions resulted in her suffering mental and emotional anguish, highlighted by a violent altercation in a hotel room in Singapore on April 19, 2011.

Upon returning to the Philippines, AAA filed charges against BBB under Section 5(i) of Republic Act No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004). The Regional Trial Court (RTC) of Pasig City issued a warrant of arrest against BBB and a Hold-Departure Order. BBB evaded arrest, and the case was archived. On November 6, 2013, BBB filed a motion to revive the case, quash the information, lift the Hold Departure Order and the arrest warrant.

The RTC granted the motion to quash on the grounds of lack of jurisdiction as the acts complained of occurred in Singapore. The court held that the act which caused mental or emotional anguish must occur within the territorial limits of the court for jurisdiction to attach. AAA filed a Petition for Review on Certiorari under Rule 45 of the Rules of Court before the Supreme Court, arguing that the RTC of Pasig City should have jurisdiction over the case as the mental and emotional anguish she experienced happens wherever she is.

Issues:

1. Whether the Philippine courts have jurisdiction over an offense constituting psychological violence under R.A. No. 9262 when the alleged extramarital affair occurred outside the country.
2. Whether the RTC's grant of the motion to quash on the ground of lack of jurisdiction stands or the case should be reinstated.

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court granted the petition, set aside the RTC's resolutions dated February 24, 2014, and May 2, 2014, and ordered the reinstatement of the Information filed in Criminal Case No. 146468. The Court held that psychological violence under R.A. No. 9262 is a transitory or continuing crime; hence, the offense's consummation can occur in different locations. The Court reasoned that while the psychological violence through marital infidelity was central to the charge, the mental or emotional anguish is an equally essential

element which happens wherever the victim is. Thus, since the resulting mental or emotional anguish occurred within the Philippines (Pasig City) where AAA and her children reside, the RTC of Pasig City has jurisdiction.

Doctrine:

1. The psychological violence that causes mental or emotional suffering to the wife and children under Section 5(i) of R.A. No. 9262 is a punishable offense, not the act of infidelity per se.
2. Acts punishable under R.A. No. 9262 may manifest as transitory or continuing crimes, allowing jurisdiction to attach to any court where any material or essential part of the offense is committed, and that the venue may be at the option of the complainant where the crime or any of its elements occurred.
3. Psychological violence as an element of the offense under R.A. No. 9262 is the means employed by the perpetrator, whereas mental or emotional anguish is the effect caused to or endured by the victim.

Class Notes:

- R.A. No. 9262 covers physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering, or economic abuse against women and children.
- Mental or emotional anguish caused to the woman or child is a requisite element of psychological violence.
- Venue in criminal cases involving violence against women and children as per R.A. No. 9262 is jurisdictional; the crime or any of its essential ingredients must have taken place within the territorial jurisdiction of the court.
- For Philippine courts to have jurisdiction over acts of violence committed abroad under R.A. No. 9262, the resulting mental or emotional anguish experienced by the victim in the Philippines is a crucial element for the exercise of jurisdiction.

Historical Background:

The case of AAA v. BBB highlights the jurisdictional debate in the context of transnational marital relationships amidst an increasing number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). The decision reflects the need for clarity in jurisdictional matters where alleged instances of psychological violence occur abroad but have domestic implications on spouses and children residing in the Philippines. The Supreme Court's ruling reinforces the objective of R.A. No. 9262 to address the complex nature of abuse and protect the rights of women and children regardless of geographical boundaries.