

Title: Danilo Ogalisco vs. Holy Trinity College of General Santos City, Inc., and/or Josemar Albano

Facts:

Danilo Ogalisco was a faculty member of the Holy Trinity College, General Santos City, since March 1992. His tenure saw him occupying various roles, including teaching Philosophy, Logic, Ethics, and Values Education; acting as Campus Ministry In-Charge; and serving as Faculty President. In 1997, rumors about Ogalisco engaging in an illicit affair with a married co-teacher, Mrs. Crisanta Hitalia, surfaced, prompting an internal investigation by the school's management.

The investigation, alleged by Ogalisco to be misrepresented initially as looking into his complaints against the school rather than his conduct, included charges of immorality, absenteeism, tardiness, and inefficiency. Ogalisco was not given the chance to directly contest the testimonies of witnesses who provided incriminating accounts of his and Hitalia's conduct. On June 19, 1998, the panel recommended termination, and his employment was officially ended on June 24, 1998.

Ogalisco filed a complaint for illegal dismissal with the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC). The labor arbiter dismissed the complaint, citing substantial evidence supporting the allegations against Ogalisco but awarded him an indemnity of Php 17,460 due to the school's failure to afford due process. The NLRC upon appeal, and the Court of Appeals (CA), on a subsequent Petition for Certiorari, upheld the labor arbiter's decision.

Issues:

The primary legal issue surrounded the validity of Ogalisco's dismissal on the grounds of an illicit affair and whether due process was accorded to him during the investigation. Ogalisco contended the CA grievously abused its discretion in deeming him afforded due process and challenged the sufficiency of evidence proving the charges against him.

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court dismissed the petition, as it found no compelling reason to overturn the concurrent findings of the labor arbiter, the NLRC, and the CA. The Court highlighted its role as not being a trier of facts and the congruity of findings by the three bodies based on substantial evidence demonstrating the affair. On the due process issue, the Supreme Court found no violation since the indemnity for lack of statutory due process was already awarded. However, the amount of indemnity compensation was heightened from Php 17,460

to Php 30,000, in adherence to the newer standard set in *Agabon v. NLRC*.

Doctrine:

This decision reiterated the principle of adherence to findings of fact by administrative and quasi-judicial bodies when supported by substantial evidence. It also applied the doctrinal shift initiated by *Agabon v. NLRC* concerning the amount of nominal damages due to an employee for the employer's violation of statutory due process.

Class Notes:

- The validity of dismissal hinges on the substantial evidence supporting allegations of misconduct.
- Due process in internal investigations necessitates the chance for an employee to respond to charges and contest evidence.
- Judicial review by the Supreme Court in labor cases does not involve reassessing evidence; it adheres to factual findings when they are supported by substantial evidence.
- In cases of due process violation, nominal damages are the proper indemnity, with Php 30,000 set by jurisprudential standards as the appropriate sum.

Historical Background:

The case reflects the judicial evolution in Philippine labor law regarding due process and aligns with the jurisprudence of the time in terms of financial recompense for procedural violations during employment termination. It echoes the prevailing doctrine that factual findings of lower bodies will be upheld in the absence of capriciousness or arbitrariness, and underscores the importance of balancing employees' rights with employers' prerogatives in maintaining discipline and upholding institutional values.