

### Title: People of the Philippines v. Rizaldy Guamos

### Facts:

On September 26, 1990, a complaint for rape was filed by the mother of Michelle Dolorical, resulting in the charging of Rizaldy Guamos, also known as “Poks,” for the rape of then eight-year-old Michelle. At his arraignment, Guamos pleaded not guilty. After trial, the lower court found Guamos guilty, sentencing him to reclusion perpetua and ordering him to indemnify Michelle in the amounts of P30,000.00 and P40,000.00 for moral damages. Guamos appealed, contesting the trial court’s conviction.

Michelle Dolorical’s testimony was central to the trial court’s decision. She recounted that on September 21, 1990, at around 4:00 PM, while on her way from school to her grandfather’s house, Guamos dragged her to her grandfather’s poultry house, where he raped her and threatened her against telling anyone of the incident. This sexual assault was later brought to light when Michelle’s mother noticed traces of blood on her underwear. Guamos presented a defense of denial and alibi, claiming he was at a construction site and later playing basketball at the time of the alleged crime. His alibi was supported by several witnesses. Moreover, Guamos argued that Michelle’s testimony should be excluded because she did not fully answer questions during cross-examination.

### Issues:

1. Whether the failure of Michelle Dolorical to answer some questions during cross-examination affects the admissibility or credibility of her testimony.
2. Whether the defense of denial and alibi presented by Guamos can prevail over the positive identification and straightforward testimony of Michelle Dolorical.
3. Whether the evidence on record, including Michelle’s testimony and the medical examination findings, is sufficient to support Guamos’ conviction for rape.

### Court’s Decision:

The Supreme Court affirmed the trial court’s decision, finding Guamos guilty beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of rape. It addressed the issues as follows:

- Michelle’s inability to answer some cross-examination questions did not detract from the admissibility or credibility of her testimony, considering her young age and the confusing nature of the questions posed to her. The Court found that the defense counsel failed to simplify his questions despite the court’s directive.
- The Court deemed the defense of denial and alibi as weak and unreliable against the positive identification by the victim. The proximity of the construction site to the crime

scene made it possible for Guamos to commit the crime.

- The Court placed significant importance on Michelle's direct and credible testimony and the medical findings consistent with sexual assault, sufficient to establish Guamos' guilt.

The Court revised the indemnity to P50,000.00, recognizing the victim's tender age but removed the award for moral damages due to a lack of special circumstances justifying such award.

### ### Doctrine:

The gravamen of statutory rape is carnal knowledge of a woman under twelve years of age, where neither violence nor intimidation need to be proven. Consent of the underage female does not constitute a defense.

### ### Class Notes:

- Essential elements of statutory rape include carnal knowledge of a female under 12 years of age, with the victim's age being the critical factor rather than her consent or the use of force.

- The credibility of a child's testimony in cases of sexual assault should be treated with caution due to their vulnerability and the complexity of cross-examination.

- A defense of denial and alibi is generally considered weak compared to positive identification and credible testimony from a victim.

- The proximity of a claimed alibi location to the crime scene must be significantly distant to be plausible as an effective defense.

- Testimony of a victim, corroborated by medical findings consistent with the crime, is pivotal in securing a conviction for rape.

### ### Historical Background:

The case highlights the judicial approach to rape allegations involving minors, emphasizing the challenges in balancing the rights of the accused with the protection of vulnerable victims. It underscores the inherent trial difficulties in prosecuting sex crimes against children, the importance of treating victims' testimonies with respect and sensitivity, and the critical role of medical evidence in corroborating the occurrence of sexual assault.