HON. GEMMA THERESA B. HILARIO-LOGRONIO, COMPLAINANT, VS. JAN PAUL LUGTU, RESPONDENT.

A.M. No. P-26-477 [Formerly JIB FPI No. 23-198-P], June 03, 2026

Ponente: KHO, JR., J.

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KHO, JR., J.:

Before the Court is an administrative Complaint[1] filed by complainant Hon. Gemma Theresa B. Hilario-Logronio (Judge Hilario-Logronio), Presiding Judge, Branch 12, Family Court, Olongapo City, Zambales (FC) against respondent Jan Paul Lugtu (Lugtu), Court Interpreter III, same court, for gross misconduct constituting violation of the Code of Conduct for Court Personnel, serious dishonesty, gross immorality, and prejudicial conduct that gravely besmirches or taints the reputation of the service.[2]

The Facts

In a Complaint-Affidavit[3] dated December 5, 2022, Judge Hilario-Logronio alleged that she received reports from Atty. Cheysser Ann V. Aguado (Atty. Aguado), Branch Clerk of Court of the said FC and from other court personnel about the infractions committed by Lugtu against his colleagues, which took place either in the courtroom or staff room. First, Lugtu has been keeping and discreetly recording the legs, buttocks, and other sensitive body parts of female court staff and other female lawyers, as evinced by photographs of Lugtu in the act of positioning his video device under the table and directing it at the lower body part of the lawyer from the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), which happened during the court hearing on November 7 and 14, 2022. Second, Lugtu was seen tailing the behind of Court Decongestion Officer Atty. Ele Christia Rey Alvarez while getting their food for lunch. Third, Lugtu was seen bending down while his black pen was below the dress of City Prosecutor Ria Nina Sususco and following her while holding the same black pen placed below the latter's dress.[4]

With such reports, Judge Hilario-Logronio directed her staff to cautiously gather evidence. However, an incident that occurred on November 28, 2022 made Judge Hilario-Logronio lose her cool and led her to experience shortness of breath.[5] On the said date, Judge Hilario-Logronio and Atty. Aguado were setting up the computers for videoconferencing. Lugtu, who then went behind Atty. Aguado, bent his body forward and placed the black pen he was then holding at the skirt hem of Atty. Aguado. To remind Lugtu about her presence, Judge Hilario-Logronio casually talked to Atty. Aguado about the bad internet connection. While Lugtu put an end to what he was doing at that time, he remained inside the courtroom.[6]

At around 8:45 a.m. of the same date during the hearing, Lugtu kept following Atty. Aguado at a close distance with the intention of positioning the black pen below Atty. Aguado's skirt. This made Judge Hilario-Logronio very uncomfortable and frustrated as she could not stop what Lugtu was doing. Despite the pain, Judge Hilario-Logronio let Atty. Aguado be the bait to catch Lugtu inflagrante delicto. An hour later, or at around 9:45 a.m., Atty. Aguado sat beside Atty. Rachelle Macalino (Atty. Macalino) of the PAO, and thereafter, Lugtu moved and sat in front of Atty. Aguado and held his black pen upward. Worse, Lugtu then sneaked the black pen below the table where Atty. Aguado and Atty. Macalino were seated. Unknown to Lugtu, this incident was captured by

two court personnel, Rowena Cabas and Angelito de Leon, using their mobile phones. Further, as this incident happened in front of Judge Hilario-Logronio, the latter took photographs of Lugtu's actions, and thereafter, confronted him. Judge Hilario-Logronio then asked Lugtu what he was doing with his pen and why it was pointed under the table of Atty. Aguado and Atty. Macalino, to which Lugtu replied "wala po, wala po." Dissatisfied, Judge Hilario-Logronio insisted on asking until Lugtu admitted that it was a video recorder which he used "para manilip." Lugtu then admitted that he used his black pen as a video recorder to capture the legs and underwear of his colleagues and further admitted saving all the video recordings in his personal laptop. Lugtu turned over the black pen. Thereafter, Judge Hilario-Logronio requested the staff to inspect it and found a small memory card/storage inside, which contained recordings of the legs and behind of Atty. Aguado.[7]

Accordingly, in an Order[8] dated November 28, 2022, Judge Hilario-Logronio cited Lugtu for direct contempt with a penalty of 72-hour imprisonment.[9] After service of penalty, Lugtu was released.[10]

Lugtu, in a Letter[11] dated December 16, 2022, tendered his resignation effective January 3, 2023, and requested approval to use his accrued leave credits for his leave of absence from December 1 to 30, 2022. Judge Hilario-Logronio accepted Lugtu's request and instructed him to submit the documents for his leave of absence. On even date, Judge Hilario-Logronio informed the Judicial Integrity Board (JIB) of Lugtu's resignation for proper disposition of the administrative Complaint.[12]

In the 1[st] Indorsement[13] dated February 8, 2023, the JIB required Lugtu to submit a verified comment.[14] After three months had passed, the JIB sent an email to Lugtu reiterating its order to submit a verified comment but up until now, he has not filed his comment.[15]

In addition to this administrative case, Atty. Aguado filed criminal cases against Lugtu[16] for violation of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 11313[17] and R.A. No. 9995.[18] Consequently, the Office of the City Prosecutor of Olongapo City filed two Informations[19] against Lugtu for the said violations.

The JIB Report and Recommendation

In a Report and Recommendation[20] dated September 24, 2024, the Judicial Integrity Board (now Judicial Integrity Office) recommended that Lugtu be found administratively liable for gross immorality, and consequently, that he be meted with a fine in the amount of PHP 200,000.00.[21]

The JIB held that Lugtu's act of taking photos of his co-employees' private parts is so corrupt and false as to constitute a criminal act. It concluded that Judge Hilario-Logronio's allegations and her witnesses, coupled with Lugtu's admission in open court, as evinced by the Transcript of Stenographic Notes dated November 29,[22] 2022, and Lugtu's refusal to counter the accusations against him, were overwhelming evidence of Lugtu's gross immorality.[23]

The Issue Before the Court

The issue for the Court's resolution is whether Lugtu should be administratively held liable for the acts complained of.

The Court's Ruling

The Court adopts the findings and recommendation of the JIB with modification.

I.

Preliminarily, it is important to note that the Court En Banc issued a Resolution dated October 28, 2025, unanimously approving A.M. No. 25-06-11-SC, titled The 2025 Code of Conduct and Accountability for Court Officials and Personnel (2025 CCACOP). After compliance with the publication requirement, the 2025

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CCACOP[24] became effective December 21, 2025, thus superseding A.M. No. 21-08-09-SC, titled Further Amendments to Rule 140 of the Rules of Court.

In this relation, Section 1 of the General Provisions of the 2025 CCACOP provides that it shall be applied to all pending and future administrative cases, to wit:

> Section 1. Transitory clause. – The Code shall be applied to all pending and future cases, except to the extent that in the opinion of the Supreme Court, its retroactive application would not be feasible or would work injustice, in which case the procedure under which the cases were filed shall govern. (Emphasis supplied)

In view of the foregoing, the Court shall resolve this case in accordance with the provisions of the 2025 CCACOP.

It bears stressing that on December 16, 2022, Lugtu tendered his resignation effective January 3, 2023, or during the pendency of this administrative matter. However, this will not preclude the Court from determining his administrative liability following Canon V, Section 2(b) of the 2025 CCACOP, which provides that "[o]nce disciplinary proceedings have already been instituted, the respondent's supervening resignation, retirement, or separation from judicial service shall not preclude or affect the continuation of the proceedings." More so, it is jurisprudentially settled that "for the Court to acquire jurisdiction over an administrative proceeding, the complaint must be filed during the incumbency of the respondent public official or employee. This is because the filing of an administrative case is predicated on the holding of a position or office in the government service. However, once jurisdiction has attached, the same is not lost by the mere fact that the public official or employee was no longer in office during the pendency of the case,"[25] as in this instance.

This preliminary matter having been settled, the Court now determines Lugtu's administrative liability.

II.

In administrative proceedings, the complainant must be able to prove the allegations in the complaint with the quantum of proof necessary for a finding of guilt, that is, substantial evidence or that amount of relevant evidence that a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion.[26] In this case, the Court finds that Judge Hilario-Logronio successfully discharged her burden to prove the infractions committed by Lugtu.

Pertinently, Canon II, Section 1 of the 2025 CCACOP provides:

> CANON II
> Propriety
> Court officials and personnel must not only be free from any impropriety, but must also be perceived to be so, with respect to their professional and personal conduct, including their activities on social media and use of artificial intelligence. They must live modestly and in accordance with their means.
>
> SECTION 1. Avoidance of any act of impropriety. – Court officials and personnel shall, at all times, avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety.

In Galit-Inoy v. Inoy,[27] the Court reiterated that immoral acts are those which violate the basic norms of decency, morality, and decorum abhorred and condemned by society. To warrant disciplinary action, an immoral act must be grossly immoral, i.e., so corrupt and false as to constitute a criminal act or so unprincipled as to be reprehensible to a high degree.[28] Immorality to include not only sexual matters but also conduct inconsistent with rectitude, or indicative of corruption, indecency, depravity, and dissoluteness; or is willful, flagrant or shameless conduct showing moral indifference to opinions of respectable members of the community, and an inconsiderate attitude toward good order and public welfare.[29]

Here, the Court finds that Lugtu's act of taking photos of his co-employees' legs and underwear, even while in the

performance of work, is nothing but grossly immoral and indecorous. At the pain of being repetitive, the Court holds that the uncontroverted allegations of Judge Hilario-Logronio, which are substantiated by the affidavits of her witnesses, show the undeniable fact that Lugtu's acts fell short of the standards of high moral conduct, which court employees are bound to maintain. Even more telling is the admission of Lugtu in open court:

> COURT (to COURT INTERPRETER MR. JAN PAUL LUGTU)
>
> Q:
>
> Sandali lang Atty. Cheysser. Can I have yang pen mo, ano ang ginagawa mo dyan?
>
> A:
>
> Wala po, ma'am.
>
> Q:
>
> Bigay mo sa akin. Ibigay mo sa akin yang pen na yan. Nasaan?
>
> A:
>
> Ito po.
>
> Q:
>
> Umupo ka doon.
>
> A:
>
> Opo.
>
> Q:
>
> Paki-check nga ito, kanina pa yan eh, check nyo kung ano yan. Bakit mo nilalagay sa ilalim ni Atty. Cheysser yan?
>
> A:
>
> Wala po, ma'am, sorry po.
>
> Q:
>
> Ano iyon? Kanina ka pa. Nakunanan ko.
>
> A:
>
> Sorry po, ma'am. Sorry po.
>
> Q:
>
> Ano muna iyon?
>
> A:
>
> Recorder po.
>
> . . . .
>
> Q:
>
> Bakit ka may recorder? Stenographer ka ba?

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A:

Hindi po, interpreter po, ma'am.

Q:

Bakit ka nagrerecord sa ilalim ng mesa? Ano iyon?

A:

Sorry po.

Q:

Ano nga iyon, anong "sorry", ano iyon?

A:

Sorry po, naninilip po ako.

Q:

Ano daw?

A:

Sorry po sa paninilip ko.

Q:

Bakit ka naninilip? Mga kapatid mo yan, pamilya tayo dito.

A:

Sorry po.[30]

In Office of the Court Administrator v. Delicana,[31] the Court has reiterated the professionalism and the weight of responsibility expected from an employee of the judiciary:

> The Court has stressed that court employees, from the presiding judge to the lowliest clerk, being public servants in an office dispensing justice, should always act with a high degree of professionalism and responsibility. Their conduct must not only be characterized by propriety and decorum but must also be in accordance with the law and court regulations. No position demands greater moral righteousness and uprightness from its holder than an office in the judiciary. Court employees should be models of uprightness, fairness and honesty to maintain the people's respect and faith in the judiciary. They should avoid any act or conduct that would diminish public trust and confidence in the courts. Indeed, those connected with dispensing justice bear a heavy burden of responsibility.[32]

Therefore, all court officials and personnel shall not only live up to the higher standards of efficiency and accountability in public service, but are also mandated to always preserve the integrity and dignity of the courts. Otherwise, they shall be found accountable and unfit to discharge their duties.[33]

Needless to say, Lugtu, being engaged in public service, is expected to perform his functions with utmost integrity and honor. As such, he must also be mindful of the provisions of R.A. No. 11313,[34] or the Safe Spaces Act, which penalizes gender-based streets and public spaces sexual harassment; gender-based online sexual harassment; gender-based sexual harassment in the workplace; and gender-based sexual harassment in educational and training institutions. The Safe Spaces Act expands the concept of discrimination and protects persons of

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diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression.[35] Nonetheless, the Court deems it more appropriate to refrain from discussing the consequences of Lugtu's act under R.A. No. 11313, given that the instant case is confined solely to his administrative liability. Moreover, prudence dictates that this issue should not be addressed in view of the pendency of a criminal case for violation of R.A. No. 11313 filed by Atty. Aguado against Lugtu.

It is noteworthy that Lugtu, who, as Court Interpreter, not only deals with other court personnel, but also with the litigants and lawyers, is required to exude moral righteousness and moral integrity in the performance of his work. More so, the fact that he belongs to a Family Court, which hears sensitive cases involving minors, is a factor that underscores the higher degree of integrity demanded by his job. Regrettably, he miserably failed in this regard.

Based on the foregoing, the Court finds Lugtu liable for gross immorality. To be sure, case law instructs that "[a] grossly immoral act is one the extent of which is so corrupt to constitute a criminal act, or grossly unprincipled as to be reprehensible to a high degree or committed under circumstances so scandalous and revolting as to shock the common sense of decency. An act to be considered grossly immoral shall be willful, flagrant, or shameless, as to show indifference to the opinion of good and respectable members of the community."[36]

III.
Lugtu's administrative liability having been established, the Court now proceeds to determine his imposable penalty.

Under Canon V, Section 19 of the 2025 CCACOP,[37] gross immorality is classified as a serious offense. As such, under Canon V, Section 22 of the 2025 CCACOP, a serious offense may be penalized by any of the following sanctions: (a) dismissal from service, forfeiture of all or part of the benefits as the Supreme Court may determine, and disqualification from reinstatement or appointment to any public office, including in government-owned or -controlled corporations. Provided, however, that the forfeiture of benefits shall in no case include accrued leave credits; (b) suspension from office without salary and other benefits for one year and one day up to two years; and/or (c) a fine of more than PHP 101,000.00 but not more than PHP 500,000.00. Relatedly, Canon V, Section 24[38] of the 2025 CCACOP considers first offense and unconditional admission of guilt and public demonstration of remorse as mitigating circumstances.

Here, the Court finds that Lugtu's act of maliciously recording the legs and underwear of his co-employees constitutes a serious charge. However, a circumspect review of the facts shows two mitigating circumstances in favor of Lugtu, i.e., this being his first offense and the unconditional admission of guilt and public demonstration of remorse in open court:[39]

> Q:
>
> Bakit ka naninilip?
>
> A:
>
> Hindi ko po alam, ma'am.
>
> Q:
>
> Anong hindi mo alam?
>
> A:
>
> Sorry po talaga.
>
> ....

Q:

Eh ano ang ginagawa mo?

A:

Gusto ko pong humingi ng dispensa po.

Q:

Hindi hihingi ng dispensa yan-

A:

Please po, ma'am.

....

Q:

Ano ang gagawin ko sayo?

A:

Hihingi po ako ng dispensa, ma'am.

Q:

Hindi dispensa yan? Binastos mo kami.

A:

Humihingi na po ako ng kapatawaran.

Q:

Para saan iyon. Bakit ka nagvi-video?

A:

Stress po, ma'am.

....

Q:

Anong stress? Stress? Anong tinitignan mo panty namin?

A:

Hindi po, legs po.

Q:

Hindi ka na talaga nahiya? Tinitignan mo ang aming mga legs?

A:

Sorry po. Hindi ko po dapat ginawa iyon.

....

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Q:

Anong please?

A:

Hihingi na po ako ng kapatawaran – gagawin ko po lahat, ma'am.

....

COURT INTERPRETER MR. JAN PAUL LUGTU

Pinagsisisihan ko po.

COURT INTERPRETER MR. JAN PAUL LUGTU

Ma'am, magre-resign na po ako.[40]

Given the foregoing, the Court finds it prudent to appreciate Lugtu's admission of guilt and this being his first offense in the imposition of penalty. As in criminal cases, a plea of guilty is considered mitigating on the rationale that an accused spontaneously and willingly admits his guilt at the first opportunity as an act of repentance.[41]

At this juncture, the Court notes Canon V, Section 25 of the 2025 CCACOP, which provides that if one or more mitigating circumstances and no aggravating circumstances are present, the Supreme Court may impose the penalties of suspension or fine, for a period or amount not less than half of the minimum prescribed under this Canon.

Accordingly, the Court imposes upon Lugtu the penalty of a fine in the amount of PHP 100,000.00. Such fine shall be payable in accordance with Canon V, Section 27 of the 2025 CCACOP, viz.:

> SECTION 27. Payment of Fines. — When the penalty imposed is a fine or when there is an obligation to return money or property, the respondent shall comply within three months from the elate of receipt of the decision or resolution by the respondent. If the fine is unpaid, indirect contempt proceedings shall be commenced against the respondent pursuant to Rule 71, Section 3 of the Rules of Court.

ACCORDINGLY, respondent Jan Paul Lugtu, former Court Interpreter III, Branch 12, Family Court, Olongapo City, Zambales is found GUILTY of gross immorality. He is meted with the penalty of FINE in the amount of PHP 100,000.00.

SO ORDERED.

Gesmundo, C.J., Caguioa, Lazaro-Javier, Inting, Zalameda, Rosario, Dimaampao, Marquez, and Villanueva, JJ., concur.
Leonen, SAJ. and Singh, J., see concurring opinion.
Hernando,[*] J., on official business.
Gaerlan[**] and Lopez,[**] JJ., on leave.

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[*] On official business.

[**] On leave.

[1] Rollo, pp. 14-19. See Complaint-Affidavit.

[2] Id. at 90.

[3] Id. at 14-19.

[4] Id. at 90-91.

[5] Id. at 91.

[6] Id.

[7] Id. at 91-92.

[8] Id. at 40. Signed by Presiding Judge Gemma Theresa B. Hilario-Logronio of Branch 12, Family Court, Olongapo City, Zambales.

[9] Id.

[10] Id. at 92.

[11] Id. at 5.

[12] Id. at 92.

[13] Id. at 85-87.

[14] Id. at 85.

[15] Id. at 92.

[16] Id. at 93.

[17] Republic Act No. 11313 (2019), An Act Defining Gender-Based Sexual Harassment in Streets, Public Spaces, Online, Workplaces, and Educational or Training Institutions, Providing Protective Measures and Prescribing Penalties Therefor.

[18] Republic Act No. 9995 (2010), An Act Defining and Penalizing the Crime of Photo and Video Voyeurism, Prescribing Penalties Therefor, and for Other Purposes.

[19] Rollo, pp. 78-81.

[20] Id. at 90-96. Signed by JIB Acting Executive Director Eduardo C. Tolentino and adopted by Acting Chairperson Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez (Ret.) and Third Regular Member Justice Cielito N. Mindaro-Grulla (Ret.).

[21] Id. at 96.

[22] Also dated November 28, 2022.

[23] Rollo, p. 95.

[24] See A.M. No. 25-06-11-SC, General Provisions, Section 2 which states:

> Repealing clause. – All rules, administrative circulars, issuances, orders, and principles established in the decisions of the Supreme Court that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Code are repealed, amended, and superseded accordingly.

[25] Office of the Court Administrator v. Judge Montero, 928 Phil. 165, 172-173 (2022) [Per Curiam, En Banc]. (Emphasis in the original, citations omitted)

[26] Soloria v. David, 961 Phil. 178, 182 (2024) [Per Curiam, En Banc], citing Re: Letter of Rafael Dimaano, 813

Phil. 510, 517 (2017) [Per J. Mendoza, En Banc].

[27] 926 Phil. 185 (2022) [Per J. Inting, Third Division].

[28] Soloria v. David, 961 Phil. 178, 183 (2024) [Per Curiam, En Banc], citing Dela Cueva v. Omaga, 637 Phil. 14, 25 (2010) [Per J. Mendoza, Second Division].

[29] Dela Cueva v. Omaga, 637 Phil. 14, 23 (2010) [Per J. Mendoza, Second Division], citing Regir v. Regir, 612 Phil. 771, 778-779 (2009) [Per J. Leonardo-De Castro, First Division].

[30] Id. at 46-47.

[31] 953 Phil. 1 (2024) [Per J. Hernando, En Banc].

[32] Id. at 19, citing Office of the Court Administrator v. Lopez, 654 Phil. 602, 607 (2011) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

[33] See Canon V of A.M. No. 25-06-11-SC.

[34] Republic Act No. 11313 (2019), An Act Defining Gender-Based Sexual Harassment in Streets, Public Spaces, Online, Workplaces, and Educational or Training Institutions, Providing Protective Measures and Prescribing Penalties Therefor.

[35] Escandor v. People, 876 Phil. 119, 149 (2020) [Per SAJ Leonen, Third Division].

[36] Romero v. Romero, A.C. No. 9272, July 29, 2025 [Per Curiam, En Banc], at 20 (this pinpoint citation refers to the copy of the Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website), citing Atty. Saludares v. Atty. Saludares, 934 Phil. 903, 910 (2023) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

[37] A.M. No. 25-06-11-SC (2025).

[38] SECTION 24. Modifying circumstances. – in determining the appropriate penalty to be imposed, the Court may, in its discretion, appreciate the following mitigating and aggravating circumstances: (1) Mitigating circumstances: (a) First offense; (b) Length of service of, at least, 10 years with no previous disciplinary case where respondent was meted with an administrative penalty; (c) Exemplary performance; (d) Humanitarian considerations; (e) Unconditional admission of guilt and public demonstration of remorse; and (f) Other analogous circumstances.

[39] Canon V, Section 24, of A.M No. 25-06-11-SC (2025).

SECTION 24. Modifying circumstances. – In determining the appropriate penalty to be imposed, the Court may, in its discretion, appreciate the following mitigating and aggravating circumstances: (1) Mitigating circumstances: (a) First offense; (b) Length of service of, at least, 10 years with no previous disciplinary case where respondent was meted with an administrative penalty; (c) Exemplary performance; (d) Humanitarian considerations: (e) Unconditional admission of guilt and public demonstration of remorse; and (f) Other analogous circumstances.

[40] Id. at 47-61.

[41] People v. Derillo, 338 Phil. 350 (1997) [Per J. Regalado, En Banc].

CONCURRING OPINION

LEONEN, SAJ.:

I concur in the result that respondent Jan Paul Lugtu is administratively liable and deserves the imposition of a severe sanction. However, I write this opinion to offer an additional characterization of respondent's conduct beyond gross immorality.

I

Complainant Judge Gemma Theresa B. Hilario-Logronio received multiple reports from court personnel regarding respondent's conduct toward his female colleagues. It was alleged that respondent repeatedly and discreetly recorded the legs, underwear, buttocks, and other intimate body parts of female court personnel and lawyers.[1] Later, complainant personally caught respondent in the act of positioning a recording device disguised as a black ballpen beneath a table to capture images of the intimate areas of female lawyers. Examination of the device's memory card later revealed non-consensual recordings taken within court premises and during work hours.[2]

This conduct gave rise to administrative proceedings and criminal complaints for violations of Republic Act No. 11313, also known as the Safe Spaces Act, and Republic Act No. 9995, or the Anti-Photo and Video Voyeurism Act.[3] Thereafter, the Judicial Integrity Board recommended a finding of gross immorality and a fine of PHP 200,000.00.[4]

The ponente affirmed the finding of gross immorality but reduced the fine to PHP 100,000.00. Further, it was stated that:

> [R]espondent's act of taking photos of his co-employees' legs and underwear, even while in the performance of work, is nothing but grossly immoral and indecorous. At the pain of being repetitive, the Court holds that the uncontroverted allegations of Judge Hilario-Logronio, which is substantiated by the affidavits of her witnesses, show the undeniable fact that Lugtu's acts fell short of the standards of high moral conduct, which court employees are bound to maintain.[5]

I reiterate my agreement that respondent's conduct is reprehensible and warrants the imposition of a severe penalty. However, I believe that, apart from gross immorality, respondent's acts may likewise amount to grave misconduct and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service.

While respondent's acts are undoubtedly immoral, labeling them solely as gross immorality risks framing the wrongdoing as a personal moral failing rather than as a concrete institutional and legal violation. Gross immorality, as this Court has explained, requires a nuanced analysis of collective notions of morality using secular, rather than religious, standards.[6] Here, however, respondent's liability does not primarily arise from a personal moral failing, but from his abuse of his position within the Judiciary and his violation of standards of conduct expected of public servants. This was explained in Perfecto v. Judge Esidera:[7]

> Morality may be religious, in which case what is good depends on the moral prescriptions of a high moral authority or the beliefs of a particular religion. Religion, as this court defined in Aglipay v. Ruiz, is "a profession of faith to an active power that binds and elevates man to his Creator." A conduct is religiously moral if it is consistent with and is carried out in light of the divine set of beliefs and obligations imposed by the active power.
>
> Morality may also be secular, in which case it is independent of any divine moral prescriptions. What is good or right at a given circumstance does not derive its basis from any religious doctrine but from the independent moral sense shared as humans.

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> The non-establishment clause bars the State from establishing, through laws and rules, moral standards according to a specific religion. Prohibitions against immorality should be based on a purpose that is independent of religious beliefs. When it forms part of our laws, rules, and policies, morality must be secular. Laws and rules of conduct must be based on a secular purpose.
>
> In the same way, this court, in resolving cases that touch on issues of morality, is bound to remain neutral and to limit the bases of its judgment on secular moral standards. When laws or rules refer to morals or immorality, courts should be careful not to overlook the distinction between secular and religious morality if it is to keep its part in upholding constitutionally guaranteed rights.[8] (Citations omitted)

There is no fixed formula for determining what constitutes grossly immoral conduct. The concept is inherently flexible and depends on the circumstances. In Arciga v. Maniwang,[9] this Court acknowledged the difficulty of fixing an inflexible standard for grossly immoral conduct:

> It is difficult to state with precision and to fix an inflexible standard as to what is "grossly immoral conduct" or to specify the moral delinquency and obliquity which render a lawyer unworthy of continuing as a member of the bar. The rule implies that what appears to be unconventional behavior to the straight laced may not be the immoral conduct that warrants disbarment.[10]

Traditionally, gross immorality in administrative jurisprudence involves conduct such as illicit relationships, marital infidelity, or transgressions against personal and familial bonds. This Court has held that it has "jurisdiction over matters of morality only insofar as it involves conduct that affects the public or its interest."[11]

Here, the gravamen of the offense is different. The defining characteristic of respondent's transgressions are not that he offended abstract moral norms, but that he violated the bodily privacy and dignity of his colleagues, committed sexual harassment, and grossly abused the judicial workplace. To collapse these concrete harms into a broad finding of immorality fails to articulate the precise nature of the wrong committed.

While it may be argued that gross immorality is an expansive concept capable of encompassing respondent's acts, characterizing a targeted; gendered violation of statutory rights merely as immorality is overbroad. Respondent's actions can and should be characterized in accordance with the specific conduct prohibited by the Safe Spaces Act and the Anti-Voyeurism Act.

II

Respondent's actions likewise satisfy the elements of grave misconduct. Misconduct has been defined as a "transgression of some established and definite rule of action, more particularly, unlawful behavior or gross negligence by the public officer."[12] It implies a wrongful intent and not merely an error of judgment.[13]

To constitute grave misconduct, the act "must also have a direct relation to and be connected with the performance of the public officer's official duties amounting either to maladministration or willful, intentional neglect, or failure to discharge the duties of the office."[14] Furthermore, as distinguished from simple misconduct, grave misconduct requires that the elements of corruption, clear intent to violate the law, or flagrant disregard of established rules be manifest and established by substantial evidence.[15]

Here, respondent's acts were deliberate, repeated, and attended by concealment. Far from constituting a mere lapse in judgment, respondent employed a disguised recording device to secretly capture images of the intimate body parts of female court personnel and lawyers. His misconduct was made possible by his abuse of the access afforded to him in the workplace. His position and familiarity with the court environment provided both the opportunity for and a cloak to his predation. Such conduct reflects a conscious and willful disregard of both the law and workplace norms.

More specifically, respondent's actions are tantamount to gender-based sexual harassment in the workplace.[16] His acts targeted women and transformed the workplace into a space of covert sexual surveillance. This directly contradicts the State's policy, as enshrined in the Safe Spaces Act, to "value the dignity of every human person and guarantee full respect for human rights[,]" and to ensure that women "have equality, security[,] and safety not only in private, but also [in the workplace.]"[17]

Seeing that respondent's actions are now embodied and punished under the Safe Spaces Act and the Anti-Voyeurism Act, it is apparent that society no longer views such conduct merely as indecent or immoral. The law recognizes it as a serious violation of privacy, dignity, and gender equality. Thus, this Court's administrative characterization should reflect that evolution.

Further, this profound violation of the sanctity of the judicial workplace likewise constitutes conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service. This principle finds its foundation in no less than the 1987 Constitution, which commands that public officers and employees must be "accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency, act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives."[18]

Conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service has been defined in Largo v. Court of Appeals[19] as any misconduct that "need not be related or connected to the public officers' official functions. As long as the questioned conduct tarnished the image and integrity of [his or her] public office."[20] This principle is especially significant to the functioning of the Judiciary.

This Court has emphasized that court personnel are at the forefront of the administration of justice. Thus, they must uphold the highest standards of honesty and. integrity in public service and always act in a manner beyond reproach. Any conduct, act, or omission that undermines public confidence in the Judiciary is unacceptable.[21] Moreover, Judiciary employees are expected to maintain a safe and respectful working environment.

In the words of former Associate Justice Antonio Carpio in his Dissenting Opinion in Estrada v. Escritor:[22]

> Court employees, from the highest magistrate to the lowliest clerk, are expected to abide scrupulously with the law. They are held to a higher standard since they are part of the judicial machinery that dispenses justice. . . . [T]here exists a compelling state interest to hold Escritor to the same standards required of every court employee. If unsanctioned, Escritor's unlawful conduct would certainly impair the integrity and credibility of the
> judiciary.[23] (Citation omitted)

Thus, Court personnel must foster a workplace free from humiliation, fear, and sexual exploitation. Respondent's conduct violated this standard. His actions did not merely diminish public confidence in the Judiciary; they actively betrayed the trust of his co-workers and eroded the Court's integrity as an institution. The Judiciary cannot properly function if its employees fear being secretly recorded by a colleague.

For these reasons, I respectfully submit that respondent's conduct may likewise be properly characterized as Grave Misconduct and Conduct Prejudicial to the Best Interest of the Service. These classifications accurately capture his violation of legally protected rights to privacy and dignity, the gendered nature of the harassment, and the direct injury inflicted upon the integrity of the judicial service.

Nevertheless, mitigating circumstances should be appreciated in the respondent's favor. As the ponente aptly observed, this is the respondent's first offense. Furthermore, his unconditional admission of guilt and genuine demonstration of remorse must be considered as mitigating circumstances under Canon V, Section 24 of the 2025 Code of Conduct and Accountability for Court Officials and Personnel.

This Court, has on several occasions, applied these modifying circumstances to lower the penalty imposed on a court employee. This was clearly illustrated in Office of the Court Administrator v. Judge Chavez,[24] which highlighted the following instances:

> In Judge Isidra A. Arganose-Maniego v. Rogelio T. Salinas, [the Court] suspended the respondent who was guilty of grave misconduct and dishonesty for a period of one (1) year without pay, taking into account the mitigating circumstances of: first offense, ten (10) years in government service, acknowledgment of infractions and reeling of remorse, and restitution of the amount involved.
>
> In Alibsar Adoma v. Romeo Gatcheco and Eugenio Taguba, [the Court] suspended one of the respondents for one (1) year without pay, after finding him guilty of grave misconduct, dishonesty, and conduct prejudicial to the best interests of the service. The respondent was a first-time offender.
>
> And, in Horacio B. Apuyan, Jr. and Alexander O. Eugenio v. Alfredo G. Sta. Isabel, [the Court] imposed the same penalty of one (1) year suspension without pay to the respondent who was a first-time offender of the offenses of grave misconduct, dishonesty, and conduct grossly prejudicial to the best interests of the service.
>
> These cited instances demonstrate how the Court tempers the imposition of severe penalties due to the presence of mitigating circumstances. Accordingly, considering this is respondent's first offense, coupled with his candid admission of fault and sincere remorse, a similar leniency is warranted in this case.

ACCORDINGLY, I vote to find Respondent Jan Paul Lugtu GUILTY of gross immorality, grave misconduct, and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service and impose a FINE in the amount of PHP 100,000.00.

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[1] Ponencia p. 1.

[2] Id. at 2.

[3] Id. at 3.

[4] Id.

[5] Id. at 6.

[6] Yao v. Atty. Aurelio, 960 Phil. 148 (2024) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

[7] 764 Phil. 384 (2016) [Per J. Leonen, Second Division].

[8] Id. at 398.

[9] 193 Phil. 730 (1981) [Per J. Aquino, Second Division].

[10] Id. at 735.

[11] 764 Phil. 384, (2016) [Per J. Leonen, Second Division].

[12] Hon. Banzuela-Didulo v. Santizo, 935 Phil. 496 (2023) [Per J. Kho, En Banc].

[13] Id.

[14] Id.

[15] Office of the Ombudsman-Visayas v. Castro, 759 Phil. 68 (2015) [Per J. Brion, Second Division].

[16] Republic Act No. 11313 (2018), sec. 16.

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[17] Id. at sec. 2.

[18] CONST., art. XI, sec. 1.

[19] 563 Phil. 293 (2007) [Per J. Ynares-Santiago, En Banc].

[20] Id. at 305.

[21] Office of the Court Administrator v. Del Rosario, 884 Phil. 18 (2020) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

[22] 455 Phil. 411 (2003) [Per J. Puno, En Banc].

[23] Id. at 651.

[24] 815 Phil. 41 (2017) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

CONCURRING OPINION

SINGH, J.:

I concur with the finding that respondent Jan Paul Lugtu (Lugtu) is administratively liable for Gross Immorality and that the penalty of fine in the amount of PHP 100,000.00, forfeiture of all the retirement and other benefits due him, except accrued leave credits, and disqualification from reinstatement or appointment to any public office, including government-owned or -controlled corporations, in lieu of dismissal from the service, are warranted.

I write separately not because this conclusion is novel, but rather to re-emphasize the inevitable consequence of a long and coherent line of legal doctrine in Philippine law, spanning Spanish colonial legislation, American-era jurisprudence, the Revised Penal Code (RPC), and the Court's administrative precedents, recognizing that conduct demonstrating a profound disregard for public decency constitutes moral unfitness incompatible with public service.

Nevertheless, as will be discussed hereunder, I must point out for correction Judge Gemma Theresa B. Hilario-Logronio's (Judge Hilario-Logronio) invocation of her contempt authority, for such prerogative does not vest in her the power to mete out administrative chastisements to her court staff Maintaining a clear demarcation of jurisdictional boundaries is paramount to preserving both equitable process and the sanctity of institutional functions.

Gross Immorality: A Litany of Legal Reckonings

The offense of Gross Immorality as a basis for administrative and disciplinary action in the Philippines has a well established historical and jurisprudential foundation. It is an offense that transcends mere personal misconduct and strikes at the core of public trust and professional integrity, especially among public officials and members of the legal profession.

Historically, the regulation of morality has its roots in the Spanish colonial period (1565-1898), when the Spanish Penal Code of 1870, applied in the Philippines, criminalized acts contrary to buenas costumbres and public

decency such as adultery, concubinage, and lascivious behavior.[1] Morality was legally framed as part of maintaining public order, connected to Catholic moral doctrine.

During the American colonial period (1898-1930), Spanish-era moral regulations remained in force, and early jurisprudence reflected the continued State interest in maintaining public order and propriety. In U.S. v. Pompeya,[2] the Court affirmed the breadth of the State's police power drawing upon Blackstone's famous formulation that government may require its inhabitants "to conform their general behaviour to the rules of propriety, good neighborhood, and good manners, and to be decent, industrious, and inoffensive in their respective stations."[3] The Court's articulation of the State's power over moral conduct contextualizes the subsequent evolution of immorality as a disciplinary ground.

Act No. 3815 of 1930 or the RPC continued this trajectory, codifying offenses against public decency and morality in Articles 200[4] (Grave Scandal) and 20[5] (Immoral Doctrines, Obscene Publications, and Indecent Shows), later amended by Presidential Decree Nos. 960 and 969 (1976).

The Court then gradually shifted the concept of immorality from criminal to disciplinary contexts. The doctrinal core of the immorality offense in administrative law derives from In re: Pelaez,[6] where the Court held emphatically that its disciplinary authority over members of the bar is not confined to statutory grounds. The Court pronounced: "[t]he statute is so phrased as to be broad enough to cover practically any misconduct of a lawyer... [e]ven where the Legislature has specified the grounds for disbarment, the inherent power of the court over its officers is not restricted."[7]

Most significantly, the Court drew a clear connection between misconduct in private life and professional unfitness, declaring that discipline may be imposed even for conduct outside professional dealings when the misconduct demonstrates "a want of such professional honesty as [to render one] unworthy of public confidence."[8] This recognition is pivotal. It establishes that immorality, whether criminal or not, necessarily implicates moral fitness.

Cases involving Gross Immorality have often centered on illicit sexual conduct that damages the integrity and reputation of public officers or members of the legal profession. The Court, in Santos, Jr. v. NLRC,[9] defined immorality as a "course of conduct which offends the morals of the community."[10] Further, in Garrido v. Atty. Garrido,[11] the Court held that immoral conduct involves acts that are willful, flagrant, or shameless, and that show a moral indifference to the opinion of a respectable society.[12] As held in the seminal case of Figueroa v. Barranco, Jr.,[13] premarital sexual relations, without more, do not amount to Gross Immorality. The Court stated, "[a] grossly immoral act is one that is so corrupt and false as to constitute a criminal act or so unprincipled as to be reprehensible to a high degree."[14]

The roots of this doctrine can be traced back to even earlier rulings such as Quingwa v. Puno,[15] where the Court disbarred an attorney for Gross Immorality anchored on his abandonment and failure to marry a woman he impregnated, reinforcing that the legal profession demands the highest ethical standards not only in the practice of law, but in personal conduct as well.

Subsequent cases have recognized that Gross Immorality is not confined to lawyers but extends to court personnel and public officials. Cases from the 1990s, such as Santos, Jr. v. NLRC,[16] demonstrate the Court's vigilance in upholding these standards among court staff, ordering dismissal from service for immorality after due process was observed.

A more nuanced view of the concept of morality was immortalized in Estrada v. Escritor,[17] where the Court embraced a contemporary secular perspective on morality, emphasizing societal standards rather than purely

religious precepts in defining Gross Immorality. This outlook was decisively fortified in Guevarra v. Atty. Eala,[18] which unreservedly held that an extramarital affair, especially when involving another married party, is conduct so corrupt and morally reprehensible as to deeply offend the collective sense of decency for it "manifests deliberate disregard of the sanctity of marriage and the marital vows protected by the Constitution and affirmed by our laws."[19]

The ripples of these rulings extended unbroken through later decisions. In Advincula v. Atty. Macabata,[20] the Court was presented with an opportunity to reference relevant precedent:

> In Zaguirre v. Castillo, we reiterated the definition of immoral conduct, as such conduct which is so willful, flagrant, or shameless as to show indifference to the opinion of good and respectable members of the community. Furthermore, for such conduct to warrant disciplinary action, the same must not simply be immoral, but grossly immoral. It must be so corrupt as to constitute a criminal act, or so unprincipled as to be reprehensible to a high degree or committed under such scandalous or revolting circumstances as to shock the common sense of decency.
>
> The following cases were considered by this Court as constitutive of grossly immoral conduct:
>
> In Toledo v. Toledo, a lawyer was disbarred from the practice of law, when he abandoned his lawful wife and cohabited with another woman who had borne him a child.
>
> In Obusan v. Obusan, Jr., a lawyer was disbarred after complainant proved that he had abandoned her and maintained an adulterous relationship with a married woman. This court declared that respondent failed to maintain the highest degree of morality expected and required of a member of the bar.
>
> In Dantes v. Dantes, respondent's act of engaging in illicit relationships with two different women during the subsistence of his marriage to the complainant constitutes grossly immoral conduct warranting the imposition of appropriate sanctions. Complainant's testimony, taken in conjunction with the documentary evidence, sufficiently established that respondent breached the high and exacting moral standards set for members of the law profession.
>
> In Delos Reyes v. Aznar, it was ruled that it was highly immoral of respondent, a married man with children, to have taken advantage of his position as chairman of the college of medicine in asking complainant, a student in said college, to go with him to Manila where he had carnal knowledge of her under the threat that she would flunk in all her subjects in case she refused.
>
> In Cojuangco, Jr. v. Palma, respondent lawyer was disbarred when he abandoned his lawful wife and three children, lured an innocent woman into marrying him and misrepresented himself as a "bachelor" so he could contract marriage in a foreign land.
>
> In Macarrubo v. Macarrubo, respondent entered into multiple marriages and then resorted to legal remedies to sever them. There, we ruled that "[s]uch pattern of misconduct by respondent undermines the institutions of marriage and family, institutions that this society looks to for the rearing of our children, for the development of values essential to the survival and well-being of our communities, and for the strengthening of our nation as a whole." As such, "there can be no other fate that awaits respondent than to be disbarred."
>
> In Tucay v. Tucay, respondent contracted marriage with another married woman and left complainant with whom he has been married for thirty years. We ruled that such acts constitute "a grossly immoral conduct and only indicative of an extremely low regard for the fundamental ethics of his profession," warranting respondent's disbarment.
>
> In Villasanta v. Peralta, respondent married complainant while his first wife was still alive, their marriage still valid and subsisting. We held that "the act of respondent of contracting the second marriage is contrary to honesty, justice, decency and morality." Thus, lacking the good moral character required by the Rules of Court,

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> respondent was disqualified from being admitted to the bar.
>
> In Cabrera v. Agustin, respondent lured an innocent woman into a simulated marriage and thereafter satisfied his lust. We held that respondent failed to maintain that degree of morality and integrity which, at all times, is expected of members of the bar. He is, therefore, disbarred from the practice of law.[21] (Emphasis in the original, citations omitted)

The Court also went on to state in Advincula that immorality has not been confined to sexual matters, but includes conduct inconsistent with rectitude, or indicative of corruption, indecency, depravity and dissoluteness; or is willful, flagrant, or shameless conduct showing moral indifference to opinions of respectable members of the community, and an inconsiderate attitude toward good order and public welfare.[22]

Time and again, the Court has stressed that although every government office is a public trust, no position demands a higher degree of moral righteousness and uprightness than one within the Judiciary. The conduct of judicial personnel—from the judge to the lowest-ranked employee—reflects upon the very image of the courts. Thus, court employees are expected to uphold exacting standards of morality and decency in both their professional and private lives to preserve the integrity and good name of the judicial institution. Their behavior must be above reproach, free from even the slightest hint of impropriety, whether in the performance of official duties or in their personal affairs. There is no dichotomy of morality; court employees are equally judged by their private morals.[23]

In all, this evolving scaffold of doctrine underscores that Gross Immorality is a transgression exceeding private fault; it undermines public trust and besmirches the honor of offices held. The law, therefore, wields the administrative hammer not merely to sanction, but to preserve the sanctity of public virtue, guiding court officials and personnel toward exemplary conduct befitting their solemn responsibilities.

Thus, I concur in the sound application of this doctrine in the matter before the Court.

Judicial Contempt vs. Administrative Discipline

The incident involving a court employee caught secretly recording a colleague's undergarment undeniably raises serious concerns regarding propriety and moral turpitude within the judiciary's ranks. However, Judge Hilario-Logronio's decision to cite the erring employee for contempt, while rooted in the need to uphold court decorum and respect for personnel, invites scrutiny to review the scope of contempt powers vis-à-vis the power to impose administrative sanctions.

The facts show that Judge Hilario-Logronio issued an Order for Direct Contempt on the same day that Lugtu was caught in the act of recording the undergarment of Atty. Cheysser Ann V. Aguado. Such action of Judge Hilario-Logronio is wanting in legal basis.

Generally, contempt powers vested in Philippine courts aim to safeguard the dignity of the court and maintain order in judicial proceedings. Under Rule 71 of the Rules of Court, contempt can be classified as direct[24] or indirect,[25] with punishments including fines and imprisonment. Direct contempt, committed in or near the court's presence, may be summarily punished, whereas indirect contempt demands formal charges and hearing. However, the powers of courts, especially judges, to impose administrative sanctions on court personnel are conventionally circumscribed.

In Office of the Court Administrator v. Judge Lerma,[26] the Court warned that the power to punish for contempt

should be used sparingly with caution, restraint, judiciousness, deliberation, and due regard to the provisions of the law and the constitutional rights of the individual.[27]

Indeed, the power to punish for contempt should be exercised on the preservative, and not the vindictive, principle and on the corrective, rather than retaliatory idea of punishment.[28]

In the present case, Judge Hilario-Logronio invoked her contempt powers ostensibly to censure the employee's behavior. While a contempt citation inherently functions as a court's immediate remedy against acts that undermine its dignity or impede justice, its reach to govern personal misconduct, especially that indelibly impacting workplace decorum, requires prudence. Contempt powers ought not to be expanded to subsume administrative disciplinary action, which entail formal investigations and procedural safeguards.

Discipline of court personnel must be pursued through administrative channels, not via judicial contempt citations. The contempt citation in this context may address immediate defiance or disrespect towards court authority, but is not a substitute for the statutory process envisaged for disciplinary sanctions. The proper course would entail submission of a complaint to the Judicial Integrity Office or to the Office of the Court Administrator, which will then undertake comprehensive fact-finding and observe due process before making a recommendation to the Court whether the circumstances warrant the imposition of administrative penalties. It is the Court, after all, which is solely vested with the power of discipline over all officials and personnel under Article VIII, Section 6 of the 1987 Constitution.[29]

In sum, while Judge Hilario-Logronio's invocation of contempt powers exhibits a desire to promptly preserve court dignity, it treads a fine line risking conflation of judicial contempt with administrative discipline. It is prudent that contempt be reserved for immediate breaches of court decorum, whereas the weightier disciplinary sanctions against court personnel, particularly for misconduct of this grave nature, be left to administrative mechanisms consistent with procedural fairness and legal safeguards.

Accordingly, I VOTE to:

1)

find respondent Jan Paul Lugtu, Court Interpreter III, Branch 12, Family Court, Olongapo City, Zambales GUILTY of Gross Immorality, and to impose upon him the penalty of fine in the amount of PHP 100,000.00 and forfeiture of all the retirement and other benefits due him, except accrued leave credits; and disqualification from reinstatement or appointment to any public office, including government-owned or -controlled corporations, in lieu of dismissal from the service, in lieu of dismissal from the service; and

2)

REMIND Judge Gemma Theresa B. Hilario-Logronio to respect the procedural boundaries between contempt powers and administrative disciplinary jurisdiction, thereby observing both respect for judicial authority and the constitutional rights of court employees.

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[1] Código Penal Español, 1870, Libro II.

[2] 31 Phil. 245 (1915) [Per J. Johnson, En Banc].

[3] Id. at 254.

[4]CHAPTER TWO
OFFENSES AGAINST DECENCY AND GOOD CUSTOMS
Article 200. Grave scandal. – The penalties of arresto mayor and public censure shall be imposed upon any person

who shall offend against decency or good customs by any highly scandalous conduct not expressly falling within any other article of this Code.

[5] Article 201. Immoral doctrines, obscene publications and exhibitions. – The penalty of prision correccional in its minimum period, or a fine ranging from 200 to 2,000 pesos, or both, shall be imposed upon:

> 1. Those who shall publicly expound or proclaim doctrines openly contrary to public morals;
>
> 2. The authors of obscene literature, published with their knowledge in any form, and the editors publishing such literature;
>
> 3. Those who in theaters, fairs, cinematographs or any other place open to public view, shall exhibit indecent or immoral plays, scenes, acts or shows; and
>
> 4. Those who shall sell, give away or exhibit prints, engravings, sculptures or literature which are offensive to morals.

[6] 44 Phil. 567 (1923) [Per J. Malcolm, En Banc].

[7] Id. at 570.

[8] Id.

[9] 350 Phil. 560 (1998) [Per J. Romero, Third Division].

[10] Id. at 568.

[11] 625 Phil. 347 (2010) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

[12] Id. at 358.

[13] 342 Phil. 408 (1997) [Per J. Romero, En Banc].

[14] Id. at 412.

[15] 125 Phil. 831 (1967) [Per J. Regala, En Banc].

[16] 350 Phil. 560 (1998) [Per J. Romero, Third Division].

[17] 525 Phil. 110 (2006) [Per J. Puno, En Banc].

[18] 555 Phil. 713 (2007) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

[19] Id. at 727.

[20] 546 Phil 431 (2007) [Per J. Chico-Nazario, Third Division].

[21] Id. at 443-445.

[22] Id. at 445.

[23] Castillo-Macapuso v. Atty. Castillejos, Jr., 856 Phil. 230, 243 (2019) [Per J. J. Reyes, Jr., Second Division].

[24] Section 1. Direct contempt punished summarily. — A person guilty of misbehavior in the presence of or so near a court or judge as to obstruct or interrupt the proceedings before the same, including disrespect toward the court or judge, offensive personalities toward others, or refusal to be sworn or to answer as a witness, or to subscribe an affidavit or deposition when lawfully required so to do, may be summarily adjudged in contempt by such court or judge and punished by fine not exceeding two hundred pesos or imprisonment not exceeding ten

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(10) days, or both, if it be a superior court, or a judge thereof, or by fine not exceeding ten pesos or imprisonment not exceeding one (1) day, or both, if it be an inferior court.

[25] Section 3. Indirect contempts to be punished after charge and hearing. — After charge in writing has been filed, and an opportunity given to the accused to be heard by himself or counsel, a person guilty of any of the following acts may be punished for contempt: (a) Misbehavior of an officer of a court in the performance of his official duties or in his official transactions; (b) Disobedience of or resistance to a lawful writ, process, order, judgment, or command of a court, or injunction granted by a court or judge, including the act of a person who, after being dispossessed or ejected from any real property by the judgment or process of any court of competent jurisdiction, enters or attempts or induces another to enter into or upon such real property, for the purpose of executing acts of ownership or possession, or in any manner disturbs the possession given to the person adjudged to be entitled thereto; (c) Any abuse of or any unlawful interference with the process or proceedings of a court not constituting direct contempt under section 1 of this rule; (d) Any improper conduct tending, directly or indirectly, to impede, obstruct, or degrade the administration of justice; (e) Assuming to be an attorney or an officer of a court, and acting as such without authority; (f) Failure to obey a subpoena duly served; (g) The rescue, or attempted rescue, of a person or property in the custody of an officer by virtue of an order or process of a court held by him. But nothing in this section shall be so construed as to prevent the court from issuing process to bring the accused party into court, or from holding him in custody pending such proceedings

[26] 647 Phil. 216 (2010) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

[27] Id. at 243.

[28] Moya v. Atty. Oreta, 915 Phil. 1, 24 (2021) [Per Curiam, En Banc].

[29] Employees' Leave Division, Office of Administrative Services, Office of the Court Administrator v. Mataro, A.M. No. P-24-192, May 20, 2025 [Per J. Caguioa, En Banc] at 21. This pinpoint citation refers to the copy of the Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

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