

Title: People of the Philippines vs. Pedro Mahinay

Facts:

On October 20, 1989, Milagrosa Bermil, a married woman from Barangay Tubigagmanok, Asturias, Cebu, reported being raped by Pedro Mahinay, her brother-in-law. Milagrosa was walking home from her farm when Mahinay allegedly attacked her on a secluded path, threatening her with a sharp instrument and forcibly having sexual intercourse with her. After the incident, she reported the event to Barangay Councilwoman Natividad Migallen and later to the local police. A medical examination conducted 29 hours after the incident showed no fresh lacerations but indicated recent sexual intercourse.

Pedro Mahinay was charged with rape. After the prosecution presented its case, Mahinay filed a Demurrer to Evidence, claiming the prosecution's evidence was insufficient. The trial court denied this demurrer, ruling it was filed without leave of court and proceeded to convict Mahinay based solely on the prosecution's evidence, sentencing him to reclusion perpetua and ordering him to pay damages to the victim. Mahinay filed an Urgent Motion to Set Aside the Decision, arguing he should have been allowed to present his evidence, which the trial court also denied, maintaining that no leave of court was granted for the demurrer.

Issues:

1. Whether the trial court erred in denying Mahinay's Demurrer to Evidence without allowing him to present his defense.
2. Whether the trial court's decision to convict Mahinay based solely on the prosecution's evidence, without allowing him to present counter-evidence, was justified.

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court found that the trial court had, in effect, granted Mahinay leave to file a Demurrer to Evidence, citing procedural orders that confirmed the defendant's intent to file such a motion and the court's acknowledgment of it. As such, the lower court erred in denying Mahinay the opportunity to present his evidence after the demurrer was dismissed. The Supreme Court set aside the conviction and remanded the case back to the trial court for the reception of Mahinay's evidence.

Doctrine:

The case clarifies the application of Section 15, Rule 119 of the Rules of Court regarding the filing of a Demurrer to Evidence in criminal cases. It highlights that if leave is implicitly or expressly granted, the defendant retains the right to present evidence if the demurrer is

denied, reinforcing the principle of ensuring a fair trial by allowing the accused to fully present their defense.

Class Notes:

- Demurrer to Evidence: A procedure where the defendant argues for dismissal due to insufficient evidence from the prosecution.
- Rule 119, Section 15: Allows the accused to present evidence after a failed demurrer if leave of court was granted.
- Significance of Court Orders: Demonstrates how procedural orders and implied permissions can affect a defendant's rights and trial outcomes.

Historical Background:

During this period, Philippine jurisprudence was evolving to balance procedural rules with an accused's fundamental rights, ensuring they have full opportunity to defend themselves against criminal charges. The need for clear procedural guidelines in the handling of demurrers was highlighted by cases like this, ensuring judicial efficiency and fairness.