



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

THIRD DIVISION

**MARIE ANNE GRACE CHUA-
MASCARIÑAS,***

Petitioner,

G.R. No. 253981

Present:

CAGUIOA, J., *Chairperson*,
INTING,
GAERLAN,
DIMAAMPAO, and
SINGH,** JJ.

- versus -

**MARTIN S. MASCARIÑAS,* JR.
and the REPUBLIC OF THE
PHILIPPINES,**

Respondents.

Promulgated:

JUL 07 2025
~~MISSING~~

DECISION

DIMAAMPAO, J.:

This Petition for Review on *Certiorari*¹ challenges the Decision² and the Resolution³ of the Court of Appeals (CA) in CA-G.R. CV No. 112231, which reversed the declaration of nullity of marriage between petitioner Marie Anne Grace Chua-Mascariñas (Marie) and respondent Martin S. Mascariñas, Jr. (Martin).

Marie and Martin were former schoolmates. During college, despite already being in a relationship, Martin attempted to reconnect with Marie. Their friendship eventually turned into a courtship, and they went on several dates. They once attended a birthday party, where they started to become intimate towards each other.⁴

* Also spelled as Mascarinas in some parts of the *rollo*.

** On leave.

¹ *Rollo*, pp. 3–37.

² *Id.* at 40–63. The December 6, 2019 Decision was penned by Associate Justice Rafael Antonio M. Santos, with the concurrence of Associate Justices Manuel M. Barrios and Tita Marilyn B. Payoyo-Villordon of the Special Seventeenth Division, Court of Appeals, Manila.

³ *Id.* at 65–72. Dated October 23, 2020.

⁴ *Id.* at 41–42.

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Later, Martin proposed that they move in together, a suggestion their parents agreed to, provided that both of them complete their studies and that Marie does not get pregnant in the interim. While living together, Marie began to notice Martin's violent tendencies. His behavior became increasingly unbearable as he forced her to do all his schoolwork while he went out with his friends. He also constantly compared her to his ex-girlfriend, causing Marie significant emotional and physical distress.⁵ Martin likewise admitted that he physically and emotionally abused said ex-girlfriend, and that Marie should still be thankful since he had already toned down compared to his previous relationship. Martin deleted all the contact information of Marie's friends from her mobile phone and prohibited her from getting in touch with any of them.⁶ There even came a time when Martin threw food on her face.⁷ Worse, he regularly had carnal knowledge of Marie while intoxicated, leading to her unexpected pregnancy. Thus, they were compelled to get married.⁸

After they got married, Martin's physical and emotional abuse worsened. He even wished death upon their unborn child and claimed that her pregnancy was the only reason why he agreed to marry Marie. At one point, in a fit of rage, Martin shoved Marie to the floor, causing her to miscarry. He said nothing and showed no remorse for his actions.⁹

Three years later, Marie graduated from college and was hired as a direct selling assistant at a lingerie company. Meanwhile, Martin joined the service crew at a fast-food chain. Feeling insecure about his wife's growing career, he sought to keep her under his control and insisted on managing their finances. Martin then quit his job, so Marie helped him secure a new position as a ride attendant at an amusement park.¹⁰

In 2010, Marie noticed that Martin had become distant and no longer wanted to sleep on the same bed. He was also constantly on his phone, texting. Soon after, during one of their heated arguments, Martin confessed that he was having an affair. Despite the pain this caused her, Marie set aside her feelings and chose to ignore her husband's admission.¹¹

A few weeks later, to Marie's unpleasant surprise, Martin woke her up and told her that they should live separately. He lost control upon seeing her and exclaimed, "[p]utang ina mo! Bahala ka sa buhay mo! Bastusan na, wala na ako[ng] pakialam sa 'yo, tumayo ka diyan!"¹² Terrified, Marie left the house but still made an effort to visit Martin twice a week. However, Martin treated her as if she were just one of his string of girlfriends. Marie further

⁵ *Id.* at 42.

⁶ *Id.* at 197, Petition for Declaration of Nullity of Marriage.

⁷ *Id.* at 198.

⁸ *Id.* at 42.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* at 42-43.

¹¹ *Id.* at 43.

¹² *Id.*



discovered that Martin was also involved with two other women, whom he would bring to their own bedroom to spend the night.¹³

Consequently, on February 19, 2016, Marie decided to file a petition¹⁴ to nullify her marriage under Article 36¹⁵ of the Family Code, with Branch 109, Regional Trial Court (RTC), Pasay City. Marie asseverated that from the time she began living with Martin, through their marriage and until their physical separation, Martin manifested psychological incapacity to perform his marital obligations, and such was grave, incorrigible, and incurable.¹⁶

Despite receipt of summons, Martin did not file an answer. Trial then ensued wherein Marie testified, along with Felicito Rocky Vargas (Vargas), her close friend, and Regina V. Beltran (Beltran), a clinical psychologist as expert witness.¹⁷

Beltran testified and affirmed the contents of her Psychological Evaluation Report.¹⁸ The Report indicated that the sources of information for its preparation were the interviews from Marie and her best friend, Camille Joy B. Biñaber (Biñaber). There, Beltran concluded that based on the data she gathered from a battery of tests and interviews she conducted, Marie was suffering from a dependent personality disorder with passive aggressive traits. On the other hand, Martin was diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder co-existing with anti-social and dependent personality disorder. These diagnoses rendered both of them psychologically incapacitated to assume and properly discharge their roles and obligations in the marriage.¹⁹

Meanwhile, Vargas testified about Martin's disposition, describing him as arrogant, snob, and a quiet but hot-headed person. He made unreasonable demands to his wife, to the point that he threatened to kill her if she did not leave their conjugal dwelling.²⁰

In due course, the RTC rendered its Decision.²¹ The RTC declared the marriage between Marie and Martin null and void on the ground of psychological incapacity. The RTC found that the totality of the evidence, including the Psychological Report issued by Beltran, have established the

¹³ *Id.* at 201.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 194–207.

¹⁵ Art. 36. A marriage contracted by any party who, at the time of the celebration, was psychologically incapacitated to comply with the essential marital obligations of marriage, shall likewise be void even if such incapacity becomes manifest only after its solemnization.

¹⁶ *Rollo*, pp. 201–204.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 43–44.

¹⁸ RTC records, pp. 157–176.

¹⁹ *CA rollo*, pp. 206–207.

²⁰ *Id.* at 208.

²¹ RTC records, pp. 193–201. The August 17, 2017 Decision was penned by Presiding Judge Tingaraan U. Guiling of Branch 109, Regional Trial Court, Pasay City.

characteristics of gravity, antecedence, and incurability of the psychological incapacities of the parties.²²

Through the Office of the Solicitor-General (OSG), the Republic of the Philippines filed a motion for reconsideration,²³ which was brushed aside by the RTC.²⁴ Undaunted, the OSG elevated the case to the CA via a notice of appeal,²⁵ principally arguing that the RTC erred in concluding that Marie's evidence sufficiently proved that Martin was psychologically incapacitated to comply with the essential marital obligations.²⁶

Finding merit in the appeal, the CA reversed the RTC Decision, thereby dismissing the petition for declaration of nullity of marriage. The CA discerned that the totality of Marie's evidence was insufficient to establish that either or both Marie and Martin are psychologically incapacitated to perform their essential marital obligations.²⁷

In the main, the CA did not ascribe evidentiary value to Beltran's Psychological Report for failing to satisfy the "required depth and comprehensiveness of an examination required to evaluate a party"²⁸ supposedly suffering from a psychological disorder. Moreover, there was no evidence from independent sources who intimately knew Martin prior and after the celebration of the marriage to lend weight to the Psychological Report.²⁹ The CA subsequently denied Marie's motion for reconsideration³⁰ in the challenged Resolution.

Disgruntled, Marie now comes to this Court, praying to reinstate the RTC's declaration of their marriage null and void on the ground that the parties are both psychologically incapacitated to perform their respective marital obligations.³¹ The root causes of the psychological capacities were amply proven by Beltran's expert testimony.³²

The Court's Ruling

The Petition is impressed with merit.

In the case of *Tan-Andal v. Andal*,³³ the three characteristics of psychological incapacity have been restated:

²² *Id.* at 198.

²³ *Id.* at 203–211.

²⁴ *Id.* at 239–242. Order dated February 22, 2018.

²⁵ *Id.* at 243–245.

²⁶ CA rollo, p. 25. *See also id.* at 20–34, Brief for the Appellant.

²⁷ Rollo, p. 50.

²⁸ *Id.* at 55.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.* at 73–97.

³¹ *Id.* at 11.

³² *Id.* at 17.

³³ 902 Phil. 558 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

Incurability must be viewed in the legal, not medical, sense. Veering away from the medical orientation, the third guideline from *Republic v. Molina*³⁴ was amended. Psychological incapacity is not a medical illness which can be cured. It must be “so enduring and persistent with respect to a specific partner, and contemplates a situation where the couple’s respective personality structures are so incompatible and antagonistic that the only result of the union would be the inevitable and irreparable breakdown of the marriage.”³⁵ To satisfy the requirement of incurability, there must be a showing of an undeniable pattern of such persisting failure to be a present, loving, faithful, respectful, and supportive spouse that must be established so as to demonstrate that there is indeed a psychological anomaly or incongruity in the spouse relative to the other.³⁶

The retained requirement on the **gravity** of the psychological incapacity must be caused by a genuinely psychic cause. It must not be mere mild characterological peculiarities, mood changes, occasional emotional outbursts, nor mere refusal, neglect, difficulty, much less ill will.³⁷

Lastly, the requisite of **juridical antecedence** means that the incapacity is determined to exist during the time of celebration of marriage. While it may be difficult, if not scientifically impossible, to determine the existence of psychological incapacity at the exact point in time that the couple exchanged their “I dos”, it is sufficient that the petitioning spouse demonstrates, with clear and convincing evidence, that the incapacity, in all reasonable likelihood, already exists at the time of the celebration of marriage.³⁸ As the Court held in *Tan-Andal*, in determining the reasonable likelihood of such an existence, “proof of juridically antecedent psychological incapacity may consist of testimonies describing the environment where the supposedly incapacitated spouse lived that may have led to a particular behavior.”³⁹

Apropos thereto, the Court, in *Navarro v. Navarro*,⁴⁰ further illumined the concept of juridical antecedence, thus:

[T]he concept of juridical antecedence must be understood to include the ordinary experiences of the spouses **not only prior to the marriage itself, but more importantly, during their “lived conjugal life” together since, as the law itself states, a marriage can be declared null and void under Article 36 “even if such incapacity becomes manifest only after its solemnization.”** As the parties have yet to assume any of the essential marital obligations prior to being married, the Court discerns that the experience of marriage itself is the litmus test of self-realization, reflecting

³⁴ 335 Phil. 664 (1997) [Per J. Panganiban, *En Banc*].

³⁵ *Tan-Andal v. Andal*, 902 Phil. 558, 599–600 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

³⁶ *See id.* at 600. (Citation omitted)

³⁷ *See id.*

³⁸ *See* J. Perlas-Bernabe, Concurring Opinion on *Tan-Andal v. Andal*, 902 Phil. 558, 673 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

³⁹ *Tan-Andal v. Andal*, 902 Phil. 558, 598 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

⁴⁰ 922 Phil. 565 (2022) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, Second Division].

one's true psychological makeup as to whether or not he or she was indeed capable of assuming the essential marital obligations to his or her spouse at the time the marriage was entered into.⁴¹ (Emphasis supplied, citation omitted)

Upon these premises, the Court finds that Marie had sufficiently overcome the burden of proving, by clear and convincing evidence, the nullity of her marriage with Martin on the ground of the latter's psychological incapacity.

It is important to note that Martin chose not to participate in the trial despite the summons served upon him. Tellingly, this exemplifies his indifference to the status of his marriage to Marie.

*The psychological incapacity of
Martin is grave, incurable, and
juridically antecedent*

To recapitulate, the CA found that the following facts were established by the evidence presented:⁴²

- a. Martin was unreasonably jealous of Marie's male friends;
- b. As Martin frequently came home drunk, the spouses habitually argued;
- c. When Marie was pregnant, she and Martin quarreled and the latter pushed the former to the ground, resulting in her miscarriage;
- d. Martin's employment lasted only a few months due to his impatience and inability to work with others;
- e. Martin admitted having extra-marital affairs; and
- f. A violent confrontation erupted between Martin and Marie regarding one of Martin's mistresses, and Marie left their conjugal dwelling as a result.

Likewise, a perusal of the records reveals that:

- a. Martin had the tendency for philandering even prior to their marriage, as shown by the fact that he still had a girlfriend when he started courting Marie;
- b. He made Marie do all household chores as well as his schoolwork while he drank with his friends, even when both of them attended school;
- c. Not only was he frequently inebriated, but he also had carnal knowledge of Marie while intoxicated, and at times, intentionally vomited in their bedroom for Marie to clean, further exposing his depravity;

⁴¹ *Id.* at 572.

⁴² *Rollo*, p. 52.

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- d. He admitted that he also manhandled and verbally abused his ex-girlfriend;
- e. He threw food to Marie's face over a petty fight;
- f. He demanded that he be the one to handle their finances despite Marie being the earner in the family; and
- g. Rather than being remorseful upon Marie's discovery of his affairs, he instead turned to anger and bedded women in their marital chambers despite Marie's hopes for reconciliation.

Based on the foregoing, there is no other conclusion but that Martin abused Marie, physically and mentally, before and after they exchanged their wedding vows. In fact, expressing regret over their unplanned marriage on account of Marie's pregnancy, he verbally wished for the death of their child.⁴³ True enough, he disregarded Marie's condition when he pushed her to the floor, causing harm not only to Marie, but also to their unborn child. Thereafter, he expressed no guilt over the incident.⁴⁴ From this very occurrence alone, palpable is his failure to fulfill his obligations as a father even prior to the birth of their child.

Contrary to the CA's conclusion that the foregoing acts were only signs of immaturity and lack of a sense of responsibility,⁴⁵ these circumstances demonstrate an *undeniable pattern of persisting failure* on the part of Martin *to fulfill his duty* as a present, loving, faithful, respectful, and supportive spouse to Marie. This renders his psychological incapacity **incurable**. In her testimony, Beltran pithily narrated:

19.Q: How did this psychological disorder of [Martin] affect his ability to comply with his basic marital obligations of love, respect, fidelity, mutual help[,] and support?

A: Because of [Martin]'s traits and behavioral patterns, [Martin] was not able to sustain a relationship with one person for a long time. More so with a life-long marital relationship founded on love, respect, fidelity, mutual help[,] and support.

....

21.Q: Given the proper medical or psychiatric attention, is there any possibility of curing this psychological disorder of [Martin]?

A: No, Sir. Even with the proper medical attention, the psychological disorder of [Martin] is chronic and incurable. It cannot be cured because of the fact that a personality disorder is an enduring pattern of behaviors, traits, and attitudes that are maladaptive and inflexible.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Id.* at 42.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 53.

⁴⁶ RTC records, p. 153, Judicial Affidavit of Beltran.

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Upon this point, the Court differs from the CA's dismissal of Martin's narcissistic and controlling actions over Marie as trivial matters and a superficial refusal to perform his marital obligation. Martin's noncompliance with his essential marital obligations cannot be considered as a mere product of some difficulty, neglect, refusal, or ill-will to escape the marital bond. Taken together, his actions reveal an innate insecurity and self-centeredness which are hallmarks of his narcissistic personality disorder with dependent and anti-social personality features. As pointed out in the Psychological Report, Martin's psychological incapacity was impermeable to recovery and is characterized by permanence as he does not see anything wrong with his behaviors, being aligned with his inner sense of self—

[Martin] had done everything to exploit his wife and had even used his masculine strength to dominate her and make her submit to all his needs. Moreover, he had only betrayed her trust by continuous [sic] to be irresponsible[,] which eventually had brought extreme suffering and emotional trauma to his wife.

Moreover, he failed to gain insight or sense of awareness about his wrongdoings but instead, he has an attitude of throwing all the blame towards other people, so that he would be able to escape accountability for his actions. Therefore, he had obviously lacked commitment towards his marriage and had extremely failed in assuming his share of responsibilities and obligations as a husband and a responsible family man.

As such, he failed to exert an inch of effort to assume the responsibilities and obligations attached in marriage. Consequently, instead of being a good husband, he continued his maladaptive behaviors. Thus, he had fallen short of showing concern towards his wife. Hence, this eventually led to the inevitable collapse of his marriage to [Marie], for he did not have the will to uphold his marital covenant.⁴⁷

The foregoing assessment of Martin's acts shows a serious and persistent failure to love and support Marie as her husband. As adumbrated in Beltran's Psychological Report, Martin's disorder commenced from his childhood and was further intensified by the responsibilities and obligations during his adulthood and their married life. Hence, it is deep-seated in his personality development, thereby causing the eventual breakdown of the marriage and hampering their normal adaptivity to the demands of married life.⁴⁸ In sum, the Court finds that the requisite of **gravity** has been satisfied.

Finally, as to the requisite of juridical antecedence, the Court finds and so holds that Marie was able to clearly and convincingly show that, in all reasonable likelihood, Martin's psychological incapacity was already present during the celebration of their marriage. At the risk of being repetitive, it is doctrinal that the concept of juridical antecedence must be understood to include the ordinary experiences of the spouses not only prior to the marriage

⁴⁷ *Id.* at 175.

⁴⁸ *See id.* at 176.



itself, but more importantly, during their “lived conjugal life” together. After all, a marriage can nevertheless be declared null and void under Article 36 even if the incapacity becomes manifest only after its solemnization.

In this case, during the early period of the parties’ relationship, particularly while they lived under the same roof without the benefit of marriage, Martin already displayed the precursors of his incapacity to fulfill his marital obligations. Presumably, their living together stood as a trial run of their marriage in order to test the waters of conjugal life. Lamentably, as above-stated, Martin’s violent and abusive nature presented itself during this time. As dissected by Beltran, such violent nature may be attributed to the psychological abnormality developed in the early stages of his life:

As a child, [Martin grew] up without proper guidance from an ideal role model[] since he had witnessed his father’s weak-willed and careless disposition. He was an absentee father[] because of the nature of his job as a [s]eaman. He also had a rare chance [to discipline] his children because he was always away. But he [] recalled being punished by his father, by letting [him] kneel on mongo seeds with books on his hands. When on vacations, he squander[ed] his money on his friends and indulge[d] in drinking spree and gambling. [His] Mother has been perceived as overprotective of her children.

Being exposed to inconsistent discipline, tolerance[,] and lack of proper guidance from [his] parents had affected his emotional development [sic]. [Martin] had harbored a lot of deep-seated hatred in his life. As such, he had lost respect towards authority figures and had also resented the lack of love and weaknesses that he had witnessed from his mother. Thus, as he progresses in adulthood, he had unconsciously imbibed some of the characteristics of his father who was “easy[-]go[-]lucky” and irresponsible. So that instead of striving to have a good value system, he had adapted the flawed attitudes of his father. This was fueled by [Martin]’s rebellious acts, considering that he was not accorded with the needed love and attention from his significant others.⁴⁹

At present, it is undeniable that these natal issues persisted until during the parties’ marriage and their stay in the house of Martin’s mother. Notably, despite the awareness of Martin’s mother of her son’s abuse against Marie, she continued to tolerate his despicable actions,⁵⁰ as she did during his youth.

Thus, based on her expert evaluation, Beltran observed that Martin suffered from narcissistic personality disorder co-existing with anti-social and dependent personality disorder, which manifests the following characteristics:

- He manifests grandiosity and sense of self-importance, as he believes he is superior and special[;]
- He is demanding and shows arrogant behaviors[;]

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 174.

⁵⁰ *See rollo*, pp. 199–200.

- He renders disposition as he pleases without consideration to the feelings of his wife[;]
- He lacks empathy and is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others[;]
- He seeks another relationship as a source of care and support[;]
- He needs help in assuming his responsibilities[;]
- He basically lacks confidence and assertiveness[;]
- He displays irritably and aggressive behavior towards others[;]
- He commits actions, which are against societal norms and the legal system[;]
- He manifests deceitful and manipulative behavior[;]
- He prefers a self-gratifying lifestyle that gives him pleasure[;]
- He felt no remorse for the offenses he had committed towards other people, including his wife[; and]
- He manifests consistent irresponsibility.⁵¹

Analyzing these details collectively, Marie's harrowing experiences during her lived conjugal life with Martin (during the marriage), as well as their history living together, and Martin's intrinsic personality forged by his childhood experiences (before the marriage), all point to the conclusion that there is **juridical antecedence**, i.e., Martin's psychological incapacity, in all reasonable likelihood, was present at the time their marriage was celebrated.

The RTC correctly accorded due credence to Beltran's Psychological Report

Despite the foregoing, the CA junked Beltran's Psychological Report for lack of independent evidence to support the findings therein. The interviews with Marie and Biñaber were not considered independent evidence that would enable Beltran to arrive at an unbiased and unassumed evaluation of Martin's psychological condition. Additionally, the CA concluded that the elements of gravity, incurability, and juridical antecedence were not sufficiently established by the testimonies of Marie and Vargas and the Psychological Report.

The CA fell into error.

Incipiently, it must be reiterated that psychological incapacity is "neither a mental incapacity nor a personality disorder that must be proven through expert opinion."⁵² The Court has settled that it is not necessary to label a person as having a mental disorder just to obtain a decree of nullity. Upon this point, a psychological report or diagnosis is not indispensable to

⁵¹ RTC records, pp. 172–174.

⁵² *Navarro v. Navarro*, 922 Phil. 565, 569 (2022) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, Second Division]. (Citation omitted)

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sustain a petition for nullity of marriage filed under Article 36 of the Family Code.⁵³

This notwithstanding, Marie presented Beltran, who testified on the Psychological Report of Marie and Martin that she prepared based on the information gathered from Marie and Biñaber. While it is true that Martin was not interviewed by Beltran, this alone should not denigrate the credence of the Psychological Report she prepared, especially since it was he who refused to participate thereto. The fact that the information comes from one side alone should not dilute the veracity of the evidence Marie presented during the trial, for to do so would punish every innocent spouse suffering in a marriage with a psychologically incapacitated spouse who comes to the court for succor. To be sure, the dilemma of bias is avoided when other persons support the *petitioning spouse's* testimony, *even if the supporting testimonies come from such petitioning spouse's friends or relatives*.⁵⁴ This is but a realistic reception of psychological assessments considering that the friends or relatives of the suspected psychologically incapacitated spouse will not be inclined to give hostile testimonies against him or her.⁵⁵

Verily, the merits of each Article 36 petition should be judiciously assessed on a case-to-case basis, including the psychological assessment, if any.⁵⁶ At this juncture, the Court echoes with approbation the RTC's pronouncement in its February 22, 2018 Order:

Contrary to the appreciation of the [OSG], the facts as they are sufficiently supported by facts and evidence [sic]; and, proven during trial should not be disregarded. It should be noted that, apart from her interview with the psychologist, [Marie] testified in court on the facts upon which the psychiatric report was based. . . . At this point, it is well to stress that having the opportunity to personally examine the veracity of the testimony of [Marie] and the witnesses presented, the [c]ourt deems it is in better position [sic] to conclude that the parties are both psychologically incapacitated to comply with their essential marital obligations. Emphasizing the importance of presenting expert testimony to establish the precise cause of a party's psychological incapacity, the presentation of expert proof presupposes a thorough and in depth assessment of the parties by the psychologist or expert, for a conclusive diagnosis of a grave[,] severe[,] and incurable presence of psychological incapacity.⁵⁷

It is likewise worth emphasizing that the collateral information upon which the report was premised corroborated Marie's account of her marital history with Martin. These pieces of information were relayed to Beltran, who, in turn, testified based on her personal knowledge and expert opinion, on the existence of Martin's psychological incapacity, which remains

⁵³ See *Tan-Andal v. Andal*, 902 Phil. 558, 597–598 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

⁵⁴ See *Georfo v. Republic*, 937 Phil. 518, 539 (2023) [Per J. Leonen, Second Division]. (Citation omitted)

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 539–540. (Citation omitted)

⁵⁶ See *Navarro v. Navarro*, 922 Phil. 565, 583 (2022) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, Second Division].

⁵⁷ RTC records, p. 241.

undisputed by evidence. Apart from Marie's clinical interview and collateral information from Vargas, Beltran likewise administered a battery of psychological tests⁵⁸ conducted to identify personality traits, as well as to determine the presence of any underlying psychological disturbances, if any.

Unlike ordinary witnesses who must have personal knowledge of the matters they testify on, expert witnesses do not testify in court because they have personal knowledge of the facts of the case. Rather, their testimony is sought because of their special knowledge, skill, experience, or training that ordinary persons and judges do not have.⁵⁹ Notably, Beltran is qualified as an expert witness, having obtained both bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology. She has been trained in the field, having practiced since 1988.⁶⁰

Applying the foregoing, the RTC correctly relied upon Beltran's expert opinion. It is pertinent that the Psychological Report was never controverted by contrary evidence. There is likewise no finding of collusion between the parties by the public prosecutor. As such, there is nothing on record that would negate its legitimacy.

Nevertheless, with Martin's established psychological incapacity to fulfill his marital obligations, the Court finds no necessity to delve into Marie's psychological incapacity as the nullification of a marriage may be based on the psychological incapacity of either spouse.

In précis, Marie's petition for nullity of marriage under Article 36 must be granted. To uphold the marital bonds between Marie and Martin in the face of the latter's wanton disregard of his essential marital obligations stemming from his psychological incapacity is tantamount to unfairly hauling the former over the coals by languishing in a marriage with a spouse who had neglected and abused her, and failed to uphold the sanctity of their marriage. On account of Marie's evidence, Martin ultimately failed to perform his essential marital obligations of love, faithfulness, and support due from any decent partner in a marriage. Rightly so, the Court declares the marriage between Marie and Martin null and void under Article 36 of the Family Code.

FOR THESE REASONS, the Petition for Review on *Certiorari* is **GRANTED**. The December 6, 2019 Decision and the October 23, 2020 Resolution of the Court of Appeals in CA-G.R. CV No. 112231 are **REVERSED** and **SET ASIDE**. The August 17, 2017 Decision and the February 22, 2018 Resolution of Branch 109, Regional Trial Court, Pasay City in Civil Case No. R-PSY-16-21858-CV declaring the marriage between

⁵⁸ I.e., Revised Beta Examination II, Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test, Machover Draw a Person Test, Rorschach Psychodiagnostic Test, Manchester Personality Questionnaire, Curtis Completion Form, and Self-Analysis Test.

⁵⁹ See *Navarro v. Navarro*, 922 Phil. 565, 583 (2022) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, Second Division]. (Citation omitted)

⁶⁰ RTC records, p. 149.

petitioner Marie Anne Grace Chua-Mascariñas and respondent Martin S. Mascariñas, Jr. null and void under Article 36 of the Family Code are **REINSTATED**.

SO ORDERED.

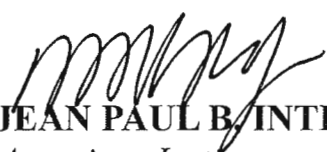


JAFAR B. DIMAAMPAO
Associate Justice

WE CONCUR:



ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice



HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING
Associate Justice

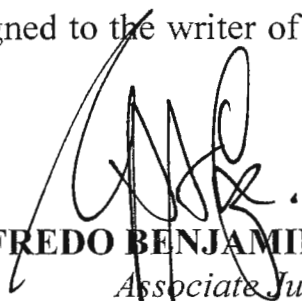


SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice

On leave
MARIA FILOMENA D. SINGH
Associate Justice

ATTESTATION

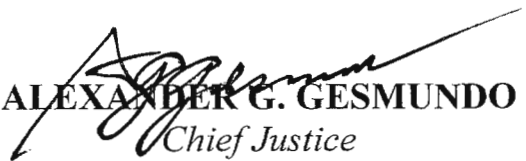
I attest that the conclusions in the above Decision had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.



ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice
Chairperson, Third Division

CERTIFICATION

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 13 of the Constitution and the Division Chairperson’s Attestation, I certify that the conclusions in the above Decision had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of this Court.


ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO
Chief Justice