

TEXAS COURT OF APPEALS, FOURTEENTH DISTRICT

Alejandro Morales Calles v. State

No. 14-14-00696-CR (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] Sept. 24, 2015) (mem. op.) · No. 14-14-00696-CR ·
Decided September 24, 2015

SUMMARY

The Fourteenth Court of Appeals of Texas affirmed Alejandro Morales Calles’s conviction for aggravated sexual assault of a child under fourteen. The court held that the child complainant’s testimony was legally sufficient to establish the offense despite alleged inconsistencies and the presence of other children during the assault. The opinion is a per curiam memorandum opinion and is designated not for publication.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Texas Court of Appeals, Fourteenth District
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Ken Wise; Justice Jamison; Justice McCally
JURISDICTION	Texas
DECIDED	September 24, 2015
DOCKET	14-14-00696-CR
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appellant appealed his conviction for aggravated sexual assault of a child, challenging the legal sufficiency of the evidence.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court viewed all evidence in the light most favorable to the verdict and asked whether a rational jury could have found the offense's elements beyond a reasonable doubt. It deferred to the jury's resolution of conflicts in testimony, credibility determinations, and weighing of evidence.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished, nonprecedential memorandum opinion
PARTIES	Alejandro Morales Calles v. The State of Texas

TOPICS

evidence standard of review appellate procedure criminal procedure burden of proof

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the evidence was legally sufficient to support Calles's conviction for aggravated sexual assault of a child under fourteen despite the presence of other children and alleged inconsistencies in the complainant's statements.

HOLDINGS

1. The evidence was legally sufficient because, viewing it in the light most favorable to the verdict, a rational jury could find beyond a reasonable doubt that Calles intentionally or knowingly penetrated the sexual organ of a child under fourteen.
2. A child complainant's testimony alone may support a conviction for aggravated sexual assault of a child, and the testimony need not be corroborated by medical or physical evidence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"We conclude that the evidence is legally sufficient to support appellant's conviction, and we overrule appellant's sole issue." (6)

"We affirm the trial court's judgment." (7)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The State alleged that Calles digitally penetrated the vagina of ten-year-old M.G. while she and her siblings were at his home. M.G. testified that Calles put his hands inside her pants and penetrated her vagina with his fingers while they were near his recliner; Calles denied the allegations. The jury credited M.G.'s testimony, found Calles guilty, and sentenced him to five years in prison.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The State charged Calles with aggravated sexual assault of a child under fourteen. After a jury trial, he was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison. The Fourteenth Court of Appeals reviewed his legal-sufficiency challenge and affirmed the trial court's judgment.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Gear v. State, 340 S.W.3d 743, 746 (Tex. Crim. App. 2011)
- Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307, 318-19 (1979)
- Isassi v. State, 330 S.W.3d 633, 638 (Tex. Crim. App. 2010)
- Muniz v. State, 851 S.W.2d 238, 246 (Tex. Crim. App. 1993)

- Sharp v. State, 707 S.W.2d 611, 614 (Tex. Crim. App. 1986)
- Turro v. State, 867 S.W.2d 43, 47 (Tex. Crim. App. 1993)
- Jensen v. State, 66 S.W.3d 528, 534 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2002, pet. ref'd)
- Newby v. State, 252 S.W.3d 431, 437 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2008, pet. ref'd)
- Garcia v. State, 563 S.W.2d 925, 928 (Tex. Crim. App. 1978)
- Carty v. State, 178 S.W.3d 297, 304 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2005, pet. ref'd)
- Muniz v. State, No. 14-06-00959-CR, 2008 WL 314963, at *2 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] Feb. 5, 2008, pet. ref'd) (mem. op., not designated for publication)
- Martin v. State, 492 S.W.2d 471, 472 (Tex. Crim. App. 1973)
- Vasquez v. State, 654 S.W.2d 775, 779 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1983, no pet.)
- Moreno v. State, 755 S.W.2d 866, 867 (Tex. Crim. App. 1988)
- Lancon v. State, 253 S.W.3d 699, 705 (Tex. Crim. App. 2008)
- Clayton v. State, 235 S.W.3d 772, 778 (Tex. Crim. App. 2007)
- Dewberry v. State, 4 S.W.3d 735, 740 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999)
- Tran v. State, 221 S.W.3d 79, 88 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2005, pet. ref'd)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

Affirmed and Memorandum Opinion filed September 24, 2015. In The Fourteenth Court of Appeals NO. 14-14-00696-CR ALEJANDRO MORALES CALLES, Appellant V. THE STATE OF TEXAS, Appellee On Appeal from the 184th District Court Harris County, Texas Trial Court Cause No. 1384626 MEMORANDUM OPINION Appellant Alejandro Morales Calles challenges the legal sufficiency of the evidence supporting his conviction for sexual assault of a child under the age of fourteen.

We affirm. BACKGROUND The State alleges that appellant sexually assaulted ten year old M.G.1 on July 1 On appeal, we will use only the complainant's initials. 27, 2012, while M.G. and her siblings were at appellant's home. That afternoon, M.G.'s father dropped her and her siblings off with appellant so that he could take his girlfriend to a doctor's appointment.

Father returned later that evening to pick up the children and take them to church. Father testified that after church, he drove to a carwash. He stated that at that time, M.G. began crying and told him that appellant had touched her inappropriately "down there." After M.G.'s outcry, Father picked his girlfriend up from work and drove the family to Precinct 6, where he relayed M.G.'s statement to an officer in the parking lot.

After some initial questioning, that officer forwarded M.G.'s case to the deputy assigned to sexual assault cases. The deputy then scheduled an interview for M.G. at the Children's Assessment

Center. During the interview, M.G. indicated that appellant had penetrated her vagina with his fingers.

The case was ultimately transferred to the Houston Police Department, and appellant was charged with aggravated sexual assault of a child under the age of fourteen. At trial, M.G. testified about the assault. According to M.G., she and the other children were watching a movie on appellant's couch at the time of the incident. M.G. stated that appellant was also in the room, sitting with his feet propped up in the recliner with his laptop in his lap.

She testified that at one point she moved from the long couch with the other children to the empty loveseat next to appellant's recliner. M.G. stated that appellant then reached over, put his hands in her pants, and penetrated her vagina with his fingers. She testified that the other children could not see what appellant was doing because his laptop and raised feet blocked their view.

Appellant also testified, denying M.G.'s allegations. After hearing all the evidence, the jury found appellant guilty and sentenced him to five years in prison. 2 STANDARD OF REVIEW When reviewing the sufficiency of the evidence, we view all evidence in the light most favorable to the verdict and determine, based on that evidence and any reasonable inferences therefrom, whether a rational jury could have found the elements of the offense beyond a reasonable doubt.

Gear v. State, 340 S.W.3d 743, 746 (Tex. Crim. App. 2011) (citing *Jackson v. Virginia*, 443 U.S. 307, 318–19 (1979)). We may not substitute our judgment for that of the jury by reassessing the weight and credibility of the evidence. *Isassi v. State*, 330 S.W.3d 633, 638 (Tex. Crim. App. 2010). Instead, we give deference to the jury's responsibility to impartially resolve any inconsistencies in testimony, weigh evidence, and draw reasonable conclusions.

Id. In conducting a sufficiency review, we do not engage in a second evaluation of the weight and credibility of the evidence, but only ensure the jury reached a rational decision. *Muniz v. State*, 851 S.W.2d 238, 246 (Tex. Crim. App. 1993).

The trier of fact may choose to believe or disbelieve any portion of the witnesses' testimony. *Sharp v. State*, 707 S.W.2d 611, 614 (Tex. Crim. App. 1986). When faced with conflicting evidence, we presume that the trier of fact resolved conflicts in favor of the prevailing party. *Turro v. State*, 867 S.W.2d 43, 47 (Tex. Crim. App. 1993). ANALYSIS A person commits the offense of aggravated sexual assault of a child if the person intentionally or knowingly causes the penetration of the sexual organ of a child under the age of fourteen, by any means.

Tex. Penal Code §§ 22.021(a)(1)(B)(i), 22.021(a)(2)(B). A child complainant's testimony, standing alone, will support a conviction for aggravated sexual assault. Tex. Code Crim. Proc. art. 38.07; *Jensen v. State*, 66 S.W.3d 528, 534 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th 3 Dist.] 2002, pet. ref'd). Additionally, the victim's testimony need not be corroborated by medical or physical evidence.

Newby v. State, 252 S.W.3d 431, 437 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2008, pet. ref'd) (citing Garcia v. State, 563 S.W.2d 925, 928 (Tex. Crim. App. 1978)). Appellant argues that the evidence is insufficient to support his conviction because “the record contains conclusive evidence of a reasonable doubt.” Specifically, appellant argues: (1) the location and circumstances would have made commission of the offense “difficult” or “impossible”; and (2) M.G. made various inconsistent statements regarding the incident.

We address each of appellant’s arguments in turn. Appellant first contends it is “impossible to fathom” how he could have committed the alleged offense under the circumstances described. Appellant notes the presence of five other children in the small living room at the time of the purported incident.² While this fact might have made the alleged sexual assault more difficult, it does not automatically lead to the conclusion that appellant could not have committed the crime.

See Carty v. State, 178 S.W.3d 297, 304 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2005, pet. ref'd) (finding evidence factually sufficient to support conviction even though brother was asleep on the floor in the same room during one assault and heard nothing); Muniz v. State, No. 14-06-00959-CR, 2008 WL 314963, at *2 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] Feb. 5, 2008, pet. ref'd) (mem. op., not designated for publication) (concluding evidence supporting conviction was sufficient even though four other children were sleeping in the same bed during the assault and reported nothing).

The jury could have believed 2 Appellant’s brief contains diagrams of the furniture placement in his living room. Because these depictions do not appear in the record, we do not consider them. Martin v. State, 492 S.W.2d 471, 472 (Tex. Crim. App. 1973); Vasquez v. State, 654 S.W.2d 775, 779 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1983, no pet.). 4 M.G.’s testimony that because appellant had his legs propped up and his laptop in his lap, the other children, watching a movie, did not see the assault.

Ultimately, it is the jury’s responsibility to weigh the trial testimony. See Moreno v. State, 755 S.W.2d 866, 867 (Tex. Crim. App. 1988). We serve only as a safeguard to confirm that the jury made a rational determination. Id. Appellant then claims it would not have been “physically feasible” for him to put both hands inside M.G.’s pants while seated in the recliner.

He argues that the presence of the children and his position in the recliner “conclusively establish reasonable doubt in a rational juror’s mind.” We disagree. As the sole judge of the credibility of witness testimony and the weight to be afforded to it, the jury was free to believe M.G.’s account of events over appellant’s testimony. Lancon v. State, 253 S.W.3d 699, 705 (Tex.

Crim. App. 2008). Appellant’s conviction indicates that the jury afforded greater weight to M.G.’s testimony, and we must defer to that decision. See id. Therefore, we reject appellant’s contention that the location and circumstances of the alleged assault cause the evidence supporting his

conviction to be legally insufficient. Appellant also argues that inconsistencies in M.G.'s accounts of the assault render her testimony insufficient to support his conviction.

First, appellant notes M.G. gave contradictory answers when asked if she was wearing a belt on the day in question. Second, appellant cites two different reasons M.G. gave as to why she moved from the longer couch with the other children to the loveseat near appellant.

Third, appellant contends that M.G. described the assault with varying levels of detail to her father, the officer, and the CAC interviewer. Again, these arguments are all aimed at M.G.'s credibility, an issue already considered by the jury.

Having heard both M.G.'s and appellant's testimony, the jury was in the best position to assess the credibility of their statements. When presented with conflicting inferences, we presume the jury resolved such conflicts in the prosecution's favor, and we must give deference to that determination. *Clayton v. State*, 235 S.W.3d 772, 778 (Tex. Crim. App. 2007).

We are not to sit as a thirteenth juror and reevaluate the evidence. *Dewberry v. State*, 4 S.W.3d 735, 740 (Tex. Crim. App. 1999). Here, M.G.'s testimony provided evidence of each of the elements of the charged offense. Regarding the specifics of the incident, M.G. testified that while she was sitting on the couch near appellant's recliner, appellant grabbed her pants and "tried to pull [her] closer." She testified that he then put his fingers inside her underwear and she felt appellant's fingers moving inside her vagina.

M.G. also testified that appellant used two fingers and answered affirmatively when asked whether his fingers moved "back and forth." Viewing this testimony in the light most favorable to the verdict, the jury, as the rational trier of fact, could have determined that the essential elements of the offense were met beyond a reasonable doubt. M.G. was ten years old at the time of the incident, and her testimony alone is enough to substantiate appellant's conviction.

See *Tran v. State*, 221 S.W.3d 79, 88 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 2005, pet. ref'd). Based on M.G.'s testimony, the jury could have found that the elements of aggravated sexual assault had been established beyond a reasonable doubt.

The jury concluded that M.G.'s testimony was credible and that it supported appellant's conviction. As the reviewing court, it is not our responsibility to discount or reexamine evidence. *Moreno*, 755 S.W.2d at 867. We conclude that the evidence is legally sufficient to support appellant's conviction, and we overrule appellant's sole issue. 6 CONCLUSION We affirm the trial court's judgment. /s/ Ken Wise Justice Panel consists of Justices Jamison, McCally, and Wise.

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